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A
BROTHER
BELOVED.



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A BROTHER BELOVED:

Biographical Reminiscences

OF THE

REV. HENRY M. LAIRD,
OF LESLIE.

THE REV. JOHN BENTON,
FREE CHURCH, AUCHTERMUCHTY.



200. c. 43.

EDINBURGH:
JOHN MACLAREN, PRINCES STREET.
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

MDCCCLXI.

210. g. 416.



PREFACE.

THE following Reminiscences have been compiled in compliance with the desire of many to have a permanent record of the life and ministry of one whose memory is still cherished by all who knew him, and specially by those among whom he laboured. The lapse of eight years since Mr. Laird's death has made the author's work one of peculiar difficulty, and he has therefore to crave the indulgence of his readers. Had the Sketch been prepared at an earlier period, it would have been much more full and complete. Such as it is, it is now offered to the public, in the hope that, while it may be found to be a true portrait of the departed, it may be also blessed of God to the souls of all who peruse it.

Mr. Laird left behind him a great mass of manuscript Lectures and Sermons, but as none of these were written with a view to publication, and all

of them were composed amid the bustle of the numerous avocations in which he was engaged, it has not been deemed advisable to publish more of them than will be found in the second part of this brief Memorial.

The author takes this opportunity of expressing his thanks to the Rev. John Logan of Leslie, and numerous other friends who have kindly furnished him with materials for the preparation of this little work.

ALBERTTOWN, *December* 1860.



CONTENTS.

PART I.

	PAGE.
CHAP. I. Birthplace and Early Days, ...	1
II. Missionary Work at Prinlaws, ...	12
III. The Disruption and Ministry at Leslie, ...	37
IV. Summer Tours, ...	54
V. Ministry among the Young, ...	59
VI. Closing Days, ...	71

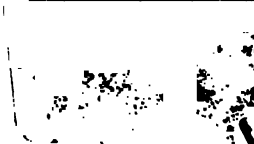
PART II.

I. Room in Christ and in Heaven for all who Seek the Lord Early, ...	83
II. A Voice from the Grave, ...	104



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~~SECRET~~



Part I.

- I. BIRTHPLACE AND EARLY DAYS.**
- II. MISSIONARY WORK AT PRINLAWS.**
- III. THE DISRUPTION AND MINISTRY AT LESLIE.**
- IV. SUMMER TOURS.**
- V. MINISTRY AMONG THE YOUNG.**
- VI. CLOSING DAYS.**

CHAPTER I.

BIRTHPLACE AND EARLY DAYS.

"My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The son of parents pass'd into the skies."

IN the county of Kinross, commanding a fine view of Lochleven, and bounded by the Bishop's Hill on the north and Benartie on the south, lies the picturesque parish of Portmoak. Here the celebrated Ebenezer Erskine, one of the fathers of the memorable Secession in 1733, prosecuted the work of the ministry for a period of nearly thirty years. "A great body of the serious people had abandoned the Established Church at the time the first Secession took place, leaving a diminished flock to his successors, some of whom were of a character more fitted to scatter than to bring wanderers back to the ancient fold."* The great Head of the Church, however, had better things in store for the place

* Dr. Sieveright's Funeral Sermon on Death of Dr. Laird.

where the gospel had once been so faithfully and earnestly proclaimed. The beginning of the present century found a young man in the pulpit of the old church, from which Erskine had declared the whole counsel of God, who, for twenty-eight years, kept up a faithful testimony for Christ, amid the surrounding deadness which the withering blight of moderatism had brought on many a district in Scotland. DR. HUGH LAIRD "commenced his public ministry in 1801, and was inducted into the parish of Portmoak the following year. His ministry extended over a space of well nigh half-a-century. His settlement here was not forced or intrusive, for he was, from first to last, an unflinching assertor of the Christian people's right of call, and never failed to protest against every instance (and too many in those days occurred), of that right being overborne by an arbitrary and unscriptural patronage, which he regarded as invading the kingdom of Christ, and divesting him, as far as they could, of his kingly prerogatives and claims to supremacy and rule over his own house."* Long did this venerable minister labour in the vineyard, "intent on every branch of ministerial duty, appearing to his fellow-servants a model of diligence, punctuality, and painful attention to

* Dr. Stevericht.

every parochial engagement." Not only was he characterised by untiring efforts for the good of the souls of his people, but he was also eminently serviceable to the bodies of many suffering ones by the good medical advice he rendered. His reputation, in this latter respect, was wide-spread, and there being fewer good medical practitioners in the "country side" then than now, many a visit was paid to his manse by parties from surrounding parishes, some of whom retain to this day, as valuable treasures, the recipes they received from him. "The unbroken continuity of his labours was remarkable, if respect be had to his bodily frame—for to keep it in a workable state, the utmost attention to regimen was required. His constitutional stamina, indeed, were so slender, that four-score years after it happened, he stated to his family that that day was the anniversary of his being laid out preparatory to the last rites, on the supposition that the feeble spark had gone out, and this native delicacy of constitution cleaved to him through life, and imposed painful accompaniments on his labours, though incapable of arresting or even limiting them." "He reckoned the ministry a work that called for the most strenuous exertion. He ministered in a place where few highly cultivated or fastidious hearers were likely to be his auditors; and in similar rural congregations there

is some temptation to do the work slightly, but he was fastidious for himself, and had respect, not merely to men's judgment, but to the Lord's, to whom he offered not what cost him little. He was a stranger to flights of imaginative eloquence, which carry away in transports of admiration, without informing the judgment and without lodging conviction of sin or duty in the heart. His style was calm, clear, and truly rational—assigning to doctrine and moral duty their appropriate places; but though unimpassioned and deliberate, his forcible statements of truth have been known to move his hearers in a remarkable degree." *

Dr. Laird, who was united in marriage to Miss Elizabeth Blackhall, was honoured to be the father of fifteen children, whose education he himself conducted. It was an interesting sight which the manse pew exhibited on Sabbath morning, when the mother with her numerous family was seen in the house of God, listening to the words of eternal life from the lips of their revered parent. A happy family circle the manse of Portnoak presented, and though at times their hearts were called to mourn under the bereaving strokes of a heavenly Father's rod, in the removal of several members, yet they wept not as those who have no hope, for

* Dr. Steveright.

they had the sweet assurance that those whose remains they buried in the churchyard beside the manse were "not lost, but gone before."

Dr. Laird was spared to take his share in the Disruption movement, and to labour in Portmoak for several years as minister of the Free Church there. He died in 1849, and we are informed by Dr. Sieveright—from whom we have already quoted—that "when he found the time of his departure drawing near, he called his whole family around him, and addressing each in particular, warned, counselled, and exhorted them with a solemnity and impression which only a death-bed can impart, and with a wisdom gathered from more than a fourscore years' experience of human life."

It was in such a home that Henry Moncrieff Laird was born, 25th October 1816. He was named after Sir Henry Moncrieff, to whom his father had been an assistant in the West Church of Edinburgh at the commencement of his ministerial career. Of his boyhood we have few records, save that by his amiability he endeared himself not only to the members of his own family circle, but to all who were acquainted with him. He seems early to have become the subject of saving impressions, though the peculiar instrumentality by which these were produced may now be unknown. Having received his elementary education under his father's roof,

when the minister interposed, and while the student was at the foot, decently interred.

He well records how deep an impression at this period of his life, in the presence of all around him, and how he conversed in the house, and by the fire, the minds of others upwards. They sat one summer day on a bench at Portmoak, the process of which was seen in a field below. He at this time read the prophecy of Isaiah—"He is led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep that is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." They walked together during the forenoon, the atonement of Jesus was the subject of conversation. While residing at his manse during the periods of the week, he spent a special hour every day in the presence of a young relative, then resident at the manse, frequently overheard him, as aloud he read the Angel of the Covenant. She often went to his study door to see if he was at home, sometimes, when very busy, he would not open, and this action, accompanied with a sign, was an intimation of NO ADMITTANCE, which she at once read in his countenance. She might enter, and engage in friendly

he enrolled at length as an alumnus in the Edinburgh University, with a view to prosecuting his studies for the work of the holy ministry. Of his College course we have but few memorials. "I have still a savoury recollection," writes one nearly related to him, "of his full and earnest prayers in conducting family worship in our lodgings, when but a youth at college. His heart, even at that early period, was in every movement which he thought had for its object the good of the Church and the progress of vital godliness." Not only was he a diligent and successful student at his different classes, but his spare hours were devoted to the work of visiting among the poor, and teaching occasionally in a Sabbath-school—good training for his future labours.

The following incident occurred to him at this period in the course of his visitations. Long-continued affliction had reduced a family recently arrived from the country to the extremest poverty, so that, when after the father's death the mother also subcumbd to disease, there were no funds wherewith to bury her. A city minister, well-known for his interest in the suffering and deserving poor, procured a coffin, and, meeting the student, took him to the funeral. There were none at the grave to lower the body but the minister and his young friend. *The gravedigger was about to throw the coffin rudely*

into the tomb, when the minister interposed, and taking the head, while the student was at the foot, the remains were decently interred.

One who knew him well records how deep an interest he took, at this period of his life, in the spiritual welfare of all around him, and how he sought in his conversation in the house, and by the wayside, to guide the minds of others upwards to his God. As they sate one summer day on a hill above the manse at Portmoak, the process of sheep-shearing was seen in a field below. He at once referred to the prophecy of Isaiah—"He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth;" and as they walked together during the remainder of the forenoon, the atonement of Jesus formed the topic of conversation. While residing in his father's manse during the periods of the College recess, he spent a special hour every day in secret prayer, and a young relative, then resident in the family, frequently overheard him, as aloud he wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant. She used often to open his study door to see if he was disengaged. Sometimes, when very busy, he would raise his hand, and this action, accompanied with a peculiar look, was an intimation of NO ADMITTANCE, while at other times she at once read in his countenance that she might enter, and engage in friendly converse with him.

In the absence of any journals or writings of his own during his student life, we gladly insert extracts from one or two of his letters written at this period, which illustrate the workings of his soul.

In one addressed from Edinburgh to his mother, on 15th Nov. 1838, soon after one of those strokes of bereavement with which the manse of Portmoak was visited, we find him thus expressing himself :

“I used to think I was going home, whenever I entered Cumberland Street, but this year everything seems changed. We feel a great blank. This world is truly a fleeting scene: the place that now knows *us* will soon know us no more. Many are the warnings which are addressed to us in the course of Providence, to be preparing for our great change. And when we see those younger than ourselves called away, it surely becomes us to be up and doing, seeing that we know not how soon we may be required to follow. Death is indeed a mysterious thing, when the spirit, quitting the body which it so lately animated, ‘returns unto God who gave it.’ To mere human reason, this is indeed a dark and unsolvable mystery. In the Scriptures, the only satisfactory solution of it is to be found. It is there alone that we see a rational account of the origin of this seeming evil. We are there told *that sin was the cause* of this, as well as of every *other calamity that has befallen our race.* It is, how-

ever, comfortable to think that this, though in itself undoubtedly a great evil, may be converted into an unspeakable blessing. Christ 'hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,' and hath 'abolished death.' His people, therefore, have nothing to fear from this last enemy. Christ has the keys of death, and He openeth and no man shutteth. To all who believe upon Him, He has made death to be the very door of admission to his more immediate presence. These are comfortable thoughts, and they should lead us, while we mourn for one whom we loved, 'not to sorrow as those who have no hope.' * * * It is indeed the peculiar character of the gospel to be especially fitted for a time of distress; let us all, therefore, study it carefully, and we shall there find that it is in very kindness and faithfulness that God has afflicted us. But if we inquire why he has wounded us in such a tender part, we must reply, 'Even so, father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' He has done it, and therefore it is well done. Let us say, therefore, with the people of God of old, when they were afflicted, 'Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten and He will bind us up.'"

A few months later, we find him thus writing to a fellow-student under great affliction:—

"I cannot express to you how much taken by

surprise, and how much grieved I was when I received the intelligence of your sister's death. Accept my most sincere sympathy on this distressing occasion. I am persuaded, however, that you know the only source of true consolation, and that you have applied to it, and experienced that whilst God wounds and casts down with one hand, he upholds and strengthens with the other. You have no reason to sorrow as those who have no hope, for you have the best of all grounds for believing that she whom you loved fell asleep in Jesus. In reference to all such the change is a happy and a blessed one, and it does not become us to murmur or complain when they are taken away. They have only gone a short time before, to their, and, if we are Christ's, to *our* Father's house. It becomes us rather to follow them with our hearts into the better inheritance, looking and longing for the blessed time when friends who have been separated upon earth shall meet around the throne above, and sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb for ever. Oh! surely it were cruel to wish our departed Christian friends back again to this world, where there is so much sin, and pain, and trouble. They are far happier where they are, and it were selfish in us to desire them to return. But are we on this account required to look on *with unconcern*, when those who are dear to us as

our own selves are taken away? No, indeed; the religion of Jesus requires no such thing. It is addressed to man as man, and it does not destroy all the finer feelings of our nature. It only curbs them, and directs them in a proper channel. Jesus himself wept at the grave of Lazarus, and no believer is forbidden to weep; but while we weep, we should also rejoice that we have still a friend in Christ who sticks closer than any earthly relative. I know the pain you must feel, and I know the impotence of all I can say to remove it. I therefore commend you to Him who hath smitten, and who will bind you up."

CHAPTER II.

LICENSED TO PREACH—AND LABOURS AS A MISSIONARY AT PRINLAWS.

“Breast the wave, Christian,
When it is strongest ;
Watch for day, Christian,
When the night's longest.

Onward and onward still
Be thine endeavour,
Th' rest that remaineth
Shall be for ever.”

HAVING enjoyed all the advantages of good training under an earthly father's eye, and having been subjected to the gracious discipline of his heavenly Father, Henry Laird, after prosecuting his theological studies under Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Welsh, was licensed, by the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy to preach the gospel, in 1839. He preached his first sermon at East Wemyss, from John iii. 16, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Like the great *apostle of the Gentiles*, he had “determined to

know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He began, as he closed his ministry, by "preaching Christ." His ministrations, as a probationer, were highly prized by many congregations to whom he was requested to preach. For several Sabbaths in succession he occupied the pulpit of Mr. Johnstone of Auchtermuchty, who was then in delicate health. It was here we first heard him proclaiming the Gospel, and pleasant at this day is the remembrance of the rich exhibition of Christ, by which his whole services were characterised. While there, he used on the Sabbath evenings to address an adult female class, taught at Southfield by the late Miss Anne Moncrieff, and there are those who can still recal the earnestness with which the young preacher used on these occasions to pray them to be "reconciled to God." There are others in Auchtermuchty who are wont to speak of his sermon on a Saturday previous to a communion, from John xiv. 27, which proved a most striking contrast to one preached the same day by a thorough-going Moderate of the old school. Soon, however, a more permanent sphere of labour was opened up to him.

Adjoining the parish of Portmoak is that of Leslie, formerly the scene of contests in the days of the Romans, and affording to the antiquarian *many remains* indicative of their residence in its

neighbourhood. It presents many picturesque views, caused by the undulating nature of the ground from the Lomond Hills to the river Leven, which divides it from Kinglassie on the south. The town, which is built on a table land, was originally the scene of royal games, in the days of King James, and a favourite resort of the nobility of the country. In modern times several large flax spinning mills have been erected on the banks of the Leven by Mr. Fergus. "It is a proud thing," writes Mr. Arthur, in the 'Successful Merchant,' "for a master to show his beautiful engine-room, clean as a parlour, his bright machinery, his admirable textures, his vast production. He has a right to take an interest in all these, and if conscious that other things were right, we should take a most lively interest in them also, share his pleasure, rejoice in his success, and pour our honest blessing on the labour of his hands. But it is not always one can do so. True, great care has been taken about the engines; what has been done for the mind, heart, and life of the engineers? The "mules" and "jennies," the rollers and looms, are all in perfect trim; the gear runs smoothly, the produce is unblameable; a world of diligent application has been spent to bring the work to this *perfection*; but what has been done for the mind, heart, and life of the workers? Some masters

there are who have learned the lesson of their duty, and follow it with a cheerful heart. As I write, some rise up to my memory. I think of their schools, the plans of improvement, the care for the comfort of their men's houses, the training of the children, the effort to spread good feeling and good living, the attention to the soul's welfare: and as I think of these men my heart within me blesses them." To the class of employers thus referred to by the biographer of Samuel Budgett, Mr Fergus belonged. Provision was made by him for the moral and religious instruction of the workers employed in his service, and resident in the village of Prinlaws. A large school with two class-rooms was erected. A good library and reading-room were furnished. In a separate building an infant school was opened, at which no fees were charged, the teacher being paid by Mr. Fergus. Evening classes were established for young men from fourteen to eighteen years of age, employed at the works. In addition to all this a missionary was provided by the proprietor, who not only paid his salary but furnished him with a house—a neat and comfortable cottage situated at the end of Prinlaws village, and commanding a fine prospect of the works, and of the surrounding banks of the Leven.

Henry Laird was engaged by Mr. Fergus +

labour as missionary in Prinlaws. The character of those to whom he was called to minister was unpromising in the extreme, and the field of operations was represented to him by some as one that would yield no fruit. But the young missionary entered on it in a firm belief in the soundness of John Elliot's motto, that "Prayers and pains can accomplish anything." Soon the effects of his labours were discernible, a change being ere long visible in the very external demeanour of the workers as they went up and down the steep hill which led from Prinlaws to the mills. As illustrative of the character of the people among whom Mr. Laird now laboured, we may here relate an anecdote mentioned by a devoted member of his flock who still survives. At one of the earliest meetings held by him for the purpose of originating a missionary association, after the proposal had been mentioned, an individual, well known in the place as the holder of infidel views and the disturber of public meetings, rose up and objected, denouncing the scheme as priestcraft, and a robbing of the poor of their money. The youthful missionary, unaccustomed to such scenes, was paralysed at this bold manifestation of the enemy; and none getting up to defend the proposal, a female member of the *meeting*, who sympathised with the movement, at length rose, and stated that so far from Mr. Laird

imposing this on the people, the step had been taken at the earnest desire of many who waited on his ministrations. This silenced the objector.

Soon after coming to Prinlaws, Mr. Laird formed a close and intimate friendship with Mr. Stewart, who was book-keeper at the mills. They were of one mind as regarded the great concerns of eternity. They lived together in the same cottage, and many sweet hours of holy fellowship were spent in each other's company, while they talked together of the things of the Kingdom. The intimacy which subsisted between them proved very refreshing to the young missionary, amid the many trials and discouragements with which he was surrounded, and it will be easily understood how painful was the stroke, when death suddenly removed Mr. Stewart from his work below. He had gone from home, and was taken seriously ill. He expressed a strong desire to see Mr. Laird, who, on this being made known to him, at once set out to the place where the sufferer lay. In driving thither with a mutual acquaintance, he expressed a strong presentiment that he would not be permitted to see his old friend in life. It was even so. As they drove into the stable-yard, the tidings of his death met them. It was a heavy blow, but we know it was *sanctified* by Him who sent it. Often have we seen *the Bible* which was given by Mr. Stewart's rel

tives to Mr. Laird, and heard him say how much he prized it, as a memorial of one he truly loved.

The missionary's work of faith and labour of love soon told on those committed to his care. The Sabbath services in the school were well attended. The weekly meetings for prayer, the Sabbath school, and adult Bible classes, the library, the missionary meetings, and the household visitations were all followed up with the pleasing and blessed results which have ever flowed from faithful and self-denying territorial labours, in which we may truly regard Mr. Laird as then engaged. Not only was he the means of promoting a great external change in Prinlaws, but he was owned as the instrument of good to the souls of not a few.

An insight into his feelings, and a view of his labours at this period of his life, are afforded in the following extracts from letters written to a very near relative, who, in forwarding them to us, remarks—"From the date of his being licensed to preach the gospel, till near the close of his brief ministry, I have numerous letters from him written just off-hand, in ordinary familiar correspondence, and in almost every one of them you see how fully his heart was set upon winning his people to Christ."

"19th March 1840.

"I have so many sick to visit at present that it

takes me the greater part of two days, from 9 in the morning till 3 P.M., to go over them all. There are six cases of severe fever. I am visiting every evening when not otherwise engaged—never in the house in the evenings except on Saturdays.”*

On the 31st of the same month, after announcing his mother’s illness, and the doctor’s fears for the result, he says :—

“But I earnestly trust that our fears may be all disappointed. Oh! that we could calmly acquiesce in all the dealings of Holy Providence, saying, ‘it is well;’ ‘it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.’ Oh! my dear G——, if we have our hearts fixed, trusting in the Lord, we need not be afraid of evil tidings; we have a throne of grace always open, where we may unburden our hearts, which we are also greatly encouraged to do when we know that we have a High Priest who wears our nature, and has a fellow-feeling with us in all our sorrows. I know well that being so far from the scene of suffering as you are, one is apt to be more anxious than when upon the spot—to be always longing for a letter, and yet afraid to open it when it comes; but that text which I have mentioned already is doubtless true—if our hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, we need not be afraid.”

* *The employment of the people at the mills all day rendered the visitation of them in the evening necessary.*

3d July 1840.

"I have now finished the visitation of my parish for the first time, and have invariably had a hearty reception. This of itself is pleasant ; but when one looks for other fruits, alas ! what are they ? I am told, however, that the people at Prinlaws are attending church better than they did, and I must say they are not so bad as I was led to expect before coming here. I am sure there were two hundred of them at the evening sermon last Sabbath."

"28th Sept. 1840.

"I think I mentioned to you that I have begun a weekly prayer meeting. It was begun three weeks ago. The first night there were about forty present, the next between eighty and ninety, and last week I am told there were upwards of a hundred. As yet I just read a chapter and expound it, but I think I shall now begin with the Shorter Catechism, and just take one question, and explain it each night. I have been exceedingly pleased with the attendance, and especially with the seriousness and attention of those who come, and if there be no falling off, I trust it may lead to good. Our hope is in Him who hath the residue of the *Spirit*."

“7th June 1841.

“What you say is true regarding our proneness to be careful and cumbered about many things. That text has always appeared to me to be a very comfortable one: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” The connection in which it stands in the 6th chapter of Matthew, renders it all the stronger, and all the more encouraging. Matthew Henry has a curious remark on that text. He says, ‘those who seek first the kingdom, &c., shall have all these things—the necessary supports of life added to them—given them over and above. They shall have what they seek, and besides they shall have food and raiment by way of *overplus*, as he who buys goods has *paper* and *packthread* into the bargain.’

“The thirsty soil is crying for rain, but there is a more parched land which cries for showers of grace and of the Spirit. Oh! for a plenteous rain to refresh God’s heritage, for it is weary.”

6th Dec. 1841.

“We have had some refreshing prayer meetings of late—every night several in tears. Our Sabbath classes are also prospering. I am thinking of lecturing through the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ at the *prayer meetings* on the alternate evenings, havin’

an address from a portion of Scripture the other nights. At the prayer meeting on Wednesday, I got £1 from a woman in Leslie for the Jews. She had gathered it among friends."

"3d Jan. 1842.

"How time flies! 1842 is begun: who will see it concluded? No man knoweth. This we know, if we be Christ's, whether we be in *time* or in *eternity*, it will be well with us. I have now been at Prinlaws two years. How short they seem when past. How little have I done, and how little fruit of my labours! Much cause for humiliation, and for increased diligence and prayer.

"I preached last night in the parish church to the Sabbath scholars of Leslie and Prinlaws. The church was very full, and the children exceedingly attentive. Indeed, I never saw them more so. I spoke for upwards of an hour, and scarcely ever lost their attention. It is just a *hit* or a *miss* preaching to *bairns*. Everything depends on the speaker's feelings at the time. This applies to all preaching, but especially when addressing the young. I trust some good impressions were made last night. There was great seriousness manifested, and some of the older scholars were in tears. These, however, are *not always signs of the presence of the Spirit*, but, *in the case of a few, I hope, they were.*"

"31st January 1842.

"Send a number of tracts for my Sabbath class, such as you sent lately. By the way, that was a good tract—'Do you go to the prayer meeting?' I gave one to each of those who get the *Record*, and told them to distribute them as widely as possible. They have caused a good deal of sensation. Some of the lukewarm, careless folks do not like them. They think the tract was written by me, and won't be persuaded to the contrary. It suits their case so well that they think I sent it to Kelso to be printed just that they might not know who the author was. There are many cold hearts here, and these are becoming more manifest since a few began to wax warmer. This has always been the case. They that are after the flesh persecute them that are after the Spirit. So it is amongst us. They that are living godly are suffering persecution—some from their own relations, all from an ungodly world. 'A man's enemies shall be they of his own house.' How true, yet how sad!"

"2d May 1842.

"I am labouring away here as usual in the midst of an ungodly and irreligious people, yet not without *some* proofs that my labours are not wholly in *vain*. A case came under my notice the other

day which encouraged me not a little. A young woman in Leslie had been brought under concern about a year ago by means of a discourse I preached on the parable of the ten virgins. From that time she came to my Sabbath class and the prayer meeting. Her parents threatened to turn her out of doors if she continued to come to the meeting. Still she came, and, one night when she went home, they absolutely locked her out. She found lodgings in a neighbour's house, where she resided for some days. She could easily support herself, and that more comfortably than at home. But she knew her mother needed her assistance, so she went and offered to stay with her again provided she allowed her to attend the prayer meetings. Her parents gladly received her, and now they never speak to her about religion at all, and allow her regularly to attend the prayer meetings. I understand her parents own that she is more attentive and kind to them than formerly, and that they have nothing to accuse her of except in matters concerning her God. She can give an intelligent account of her conversion. She was long in deep distress, and said she was often afraid to go to sleep at night lest she should awake in hell. Though not altogether free from fear, she has now *more peace*. She walks consistently, which is no *easy matter in a situation like hers*. I pray God.

her heart may be established with grace. Those of whom I formerly spoke, so far as I know, all continue steadfast. My only wish is that the 'religious people,' (which they have been termed by way of reproach) were increased an hundredfold."

Mr. Laird had many cases similar to those referred to in these extracts. We cannot better close our notices of this period of his life than by presenting to our readers a letter written by him to a member of his Prinlaws flock when in a state of spiritual darkness. We give it unabridged, not only because of its intrinsic worth, but because of the light which it sheds on the deep solicitude he cherished for the individual cases of those with whom he was connected.

"Prinlaws, 29th March 1843.

"MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIEND,—The last time I called upon you, you were pleased to unburden your mind pretty freely to me, and to mention some things which were causing you no little uneasiness. From some cause or another I felt peculiarly depressed that day, and my tongue refused to speak what I felt, or to declare what I conceived to be suitable to your case. For the purpose of endeavouring to minister consolation to you under your present affliction, I have thought :

right to take up my pen in order to express in writing what on Monday I failed to express by word of mouth. I know you will take in good part and in a spirit of meekness what I have to say, if you find it consistent with the mind of the Holy Ghost.

“‘There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.’ Such is one of the proverbs of Solomon, and its truth is every day exemplified. Very many think themselves rich and increased with goods, and that they have need of nothing, when, in reality, they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. On the other hand, there are some who fear lest they should still be in all the poverty of a natural state, and in all the nakedness of an unclothed condition, when in truth they are possessed of ‘durable riches,’ and are arrayed in that royal robe of righteousness which is ‘clear as the sun’ and broad as the law—the robe of Jesus. It is far better to be in the situation of the latter, with all its present discomfort and anxiety, than to be in the condition of the former, with all its apparent security and its false whispers of ‘peace, peace, when there is no peace.’ But it is of unspeakable *moment that we discover to which of these two classes we belong*, and I think there are sufficient

marks and evidences of a work of God laid down in Scripture by which we may judge ourselves and know 'whether or not Christ be in us.' True, indeed, it is easier to apply these tests to the case of others than to our own by reason of the deceitfulness of our hearts, but in that case we have a prayer ready for our use, 'Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.'

"So far as I can judge from what you told me on Monday, your case is not an uncommon one. You feel less *sensible delight* in waiting upon God than you once did; the sweetness of your communion with the Father is in some measure suspended, and the cheering comforts you formerly knew are withheld, or at least are not enjoyed so largely, so that Job's language expresses your feelings: 'Oh! that it were with me as in months past, &c.' When you wait upon God, your heart feels *duller*, and your affections more languid than once they did, so that you are almost tempted at times to fear lest, after all, you should have no part or lot with Christ. If you could *rest satisfied* in this condition, and felt no anxiety to be delivered from it, you might have reason to fear that all was not right; but if it is your burden that you cannot get that enlargement of heart and

brokenness of spirit which you earnestly thirst after, then I would say, in the language of the Apostle, 'Think it not strange concerning this fiery trial, by which God is trying your faith, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' I believe (if the above be descriptive of your feelings) that God is trying you to see whether you can trust him in the dark, and can wait on him even in the way of his judgments. Say not, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, my judgment is passed over from my God.' Say rather, 'the Lord knoweth the way that I take, when he hath (sufficiently) tried me, I shall come forth as the gold.' You have heard the saying of an experienced believer, 'to believe when all is pleasing, when peace smiles upon the soul, and comforts bestrew its path, is comparatively an easy thing, but to believe when all is dark and dreary, when no comfort is felt within, and no light is seen without, this is the faith which God values.' To love when the soul feels the assurance of God's love, and the joys which love imparts, is comparatively easy, but to love when his presence is withdrawn, when doubts and fears infest the soul, when hope is languishing and comforts apparently dead, this shows strong confidence in the faithlessness of God, and a love *which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown.* It is difficult thus to believe in the dark,

and to wait upon God even when 'His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known;' but this is what many of his own children are called to do, and in such circumstances they are often ready to say, with the Church of old, 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,' whereas the same gracious answer may be given, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb—they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before me.' Christ is not always farthest from his people when they *suppose* he has *forgotten* them, nor does *his* love grow cold when *their* faith is so weak that they cannot see him. 'Behold,' it is said in the Song of Solomon, 'He standeth behind our wall; he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.' His eye is upon his own, and though their iniquities may for a time separate betwixt them and him, and may cause him to hide his face, as if he did not hear, still he looks into their hearts, and *marks* the most *secret workings* of their souls; and at the proper time (when his purpose in withdrawing himself is answered) he will show *himself*, and will prove the truth of that gracious *promise*, 'for a small moment have I forsake

thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee.'

"In reading a letter of the celebrated John Newton, whose praise is in all the churches of Christ, I see a passage which I shall transcribe, and perhaps it may speak a word in season to you as it has done to me. He is speaking of unbelief striving with the Christian, and after mentioning many doubts and perplexing thoughts which Satan suggests to the mind of an anxious sinner seeking salvation, he comes to speak of doubts which often arise after conversion, and which cause trouble to many a humble and sincere disciple. 'The devil,' he says, 'will allow that salvation is certain to *real* believers, but he will tempt you to doubt your own sincerity, and will suggest this thought, How do you know that you are a believer? Many have made false professions, and fallen off at last. You cannot judge your own heart, and, *therefore*, may be deceived. I have been sometimes *pinched* at this; for though there are undoubted marks and evidences of a work of God laid down in Scripture, it is not always easy to apply them without falling into a legal temper, and then they *can afford us no comfort*. They are something *like a dial* which will direct you with a glance

when the sun shines, but is of no use at other times. When the Spirit of God shines into the heart, and witnesses with our spirits, then we can both distinguish the evidence and trace the growth of our graces; but alas! sin, like a thick cloud, often interposes, our sun withdraws, and what can we do? However, there is *one mark* which seldom fails. Had our Lord said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' and said no more, alas! what comfort would this have been to me, who am so full of impurity even in my solemn moments; but he has stooped so low in compassion to me, to you, and to all that seek him, as to say, 'Blessed are they that *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' Now, though I might question and scruple whether I have any righteousness or no; yet, if I can be judge of anything at all—if I can tell whether I am asleep or awake, hot or cold, in Scotland or England, so sure I am that God has inspired me with a hungering and thirsting which nothing worldly can satisfy. This is the experience of every day—abroad or at home, alone or in company. I still feel a void. I feel that I want a conformity to God—a sense of his presence and of his love, to make the happiest scenes of life agreeable to me. In proportion as these withdraw or *advance*, I find myself more or less satisfied with

myself and everything about me. Now, I can well remember when I had not these desires. I am sure I did not give them to myself, neither can they proceed from evil influence, because their direct tendency is to destroy sin and promote holiness, therefore they must be of God. If so, they must prevail in the end, or, as the promise runs they *shall* be satisfied, for God is not like the unwise builder, who began a work at unawares, which he was not able to finish. He which hath begun a good work of grace will carry it on unto perfection, and will keep his own through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.'

"Perhaps the above extract from the writings of Newton describes in some degree your case. Surely you have a hungering and thirsting which nothing worldly can satisfy; and if so, who created that desire? Open the mouth of spiritual desires wide, and in due season the Lord will fill it. Beware of harbouring unbelieving doubts regarding the faithlessness of the Great Redeemer, or the immutability of His love towards them that seek Him. Look anew to His cross, and behold His power to save. Think of His words, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,' and be assured of His willingness. Hear His voice *and follow Him*, and He will not leave you long *to walk in darkness*, but will give you the light

of life. It is His peculiar prerogative 'to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'

"But, perhaps, the above does not yet reach your case, for you may be ready to say, 'all this is true, but how shall I recover my former joy and peace in believing.' There is no doubt God has a wise purpose to serve by all the trials He sends, and when under any temptation or affliction it is right that we inquire wherefore He contends with us? Perhaps some root of bitterness has been allowed to spring up in secret, or some worldly care has been allowed to weigh too heavily upon our spirits. Perhaps God may be intending to increase our faith, and to strengthen our graces, or to fit us for still greater manifestations of His grace and glory; but whatever be His design, it is our duty to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, yet never to 'cast away our confidence which hath great recompense of reward,' but still to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Christ.' Let this be your language, 'Why art thou cast down, oh! my soul; why art thou disquieted within me?' Read Psalms 51st, 73d, 77th, 130th, and many others, and you will see that many of the best of

God's people have been in darkness while in this world, and if you turn up Isaiah l. 10, you will see what is the duty of believers in such a situation.

“Now, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, is the earnest prayer of

Your sincere Friend and Well-wisher.

CHAPTER III.

THE DISRUPTION, AND MINISTRY AT LESLIE.

"His eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back, he stood as if he pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head." *Scene in Interpreter's House. "Pilgrim's Progress."*

HENRY LAIRD frequently quoted with delight the remark of M'Cheyne, when he thanked God that he lived in witnessing times. During the memorable "ten years' conflict," he was an interested and intelligent spectator of all the stirring scenes through which the Church of our fathers was passing. He was the son of one who looked on the great questions then agitated as vital ones, affecting the glory and honour of the Redeemer; and, like his father, he had no sympathy with those who spoke of this controversy as a light matter, about which God's servants might remain indifferent if they chose. From the very outset of the struggle, he went along with the reforming party in the Church, *who asserted the great principle of non-intrusion,*

and the Church's spiritual independence. When matters came to a crisis, and the probationers of the Church had to make up their minds as to the course they would follow in the event of the Disruption, he had no hesitation in casting in his lot with those who, rather than submit to the aggressions made by the Civil Courts on the Church's spiritual freedom, resolved to join those fathers and brethren who intimated to the highest ruling powers in the land that they would be constrained to go forth from their connection with the State, if their claim of rights was rejected. When the Convocation met in November 1842, he came to Edinburgh and took up his abode under my roof. In all the meetings of the probationers, and their resolutions of adherence, he took a deep and lively interest. Returning to Fife, he availed himself of every fitting opportunity of explaining the great principles involved in the controversy to his people, so that when the day of the Disruption had arrived, many in Prinlaws, as well as Leslie, were prepared to gather round the old banner of the Covenant, and join the Free Protestant Church of Scotland. Mr Laird was again my guest in Edinburgh, on the memorable occasion when the "last act of the eventful drama" was to be witnessed. He came to town two days before "the 18th of May 1843." *He was present along with me at some of the pre-*

liminary meetings which were held for imploring divine guidance and strength in the hour of trial. He accompanied me to St. Andrew's Church on the morning of the never-to-be-forgotten Thursday. We sat together for hours in a front seat of the gallery allotted to preachers and students, expecting the arrival of the Commissioner and members of Assembly, after the service in St. Giles's. We beheld their imposing entrance, heard the Protest read by Dr. Welsh, witnessed the exodus, and joined the band of those who marched in procession to Canonmills Hall, where the first Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland was constituted. Mr. Laird's feelings were those of deep solemnity and holy thankfulness to God, who had stood by his Church and people in the hour of trial, and lively was the interest he took in all the proceedings of the "Disruption Assembly." A pleasant and profitable season of fellowship we had together, and often in later years we used to talk over many of the incidents by which that fortnight was marked. Being a thorough Free Churchman, and alive to everything bearing on the great question at issue, he often urged me to make public two facts, of which he knew me to be in possession. These sufficiently prove how erroneous was the allegation, frequently made at the period of the Disruption, *that the number of students in the Edinburgh*

Divinity Hall, who adhered to the Resolutions of the Convocationists, was accounted for by the influence exercised over them by Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Welsh.

The one fact is a letter written by Dr. Chalmers, in reply to a communication from the students. It was addressed to Mr Alex. James Campbell, afterwards minister of Melrose, and now labouring in Australia, by whom their Declaration was transmitted to him :—

“ College, Feb. 10, 1843.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I received your Declaration, and have lodged it with Mr. Brown, the Chairman of the Convocation Committee.

“ I feel particular satisfaction in yours being the first communication I have had with the students on the subject, and that the act on their part has been altogether spontaneous—the pure and unbiassed expression of their own principles and feelings.—I ever am, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

“ THOS. CHALMERS.”

“ A. J. Campbell, Esq.”

The other fact consists of a conversation which I had with Dr. Welsh, from which it will be seen that he studiously avoided all reference to the subject in dealing with his students, whether in public

or private. The memorable letter of Sir James Graham, in reply to the Assembly's Claim of Rights, had just been published. I ventured to put the question to the Professor of Church History, with whom I had gone to breakfast one Saturday morning, when we were alone in his study, "What will be done with Sir James Graham's Letter?" He immediately replied—"You are the first student who has ever spoken to me on the subject of the Church question. It is a subject on which I have never once spoken to a student, and to which I have never made a single reference in my lectures. I have purposely avoided any communication with my students in regard to it, lest, knowing their peculiar sentiments, I might be tempted to be guilty of partiality." And then he added, "Since you have spoken of it to me, I may say, that of course we never can accede to the terms of that Letter." He then, with a look of peculiar anxiety, said, "Might I ask, how are the students generally affected?" I told him that out of a hundred and eight, ninety-three had resolved to adhere to the Resolutions of the Convocation. His eye beamed with joy, and he immediately added, "That is noble. It is more than I expected. I did not think that the ministers who have signed these Resolutions would give way, but THE YOUNG MEN" (with that peculiar

emphasis, and a degree of hesitation by which his public speaking and private conversation were often marked)—“THE YOUNG MEN—I feared the temptation would prove too great for them. What you mention is most noble.” Entreating me to let the conversation entirely drop, in the event of any other student entering the room, he then gave vent to an expression of gratitude to God for the many encouragements He was giving in the great movement which was going on.

On Mr. Laird returning to Leslie, those adhering to the Free Church met in what had been occupied as the Original Secession Church. Here they worshipped till a new church was erected.

When, some time before this memorable period, a proposal was made to have a *quoad sacra* Church erected in Prinlawa, Mr. Fergus kindly offered a feu, and now he would gladly have given it as a site for a Free Church, if it had been deemed suitable. It was judged, however, advisable to have the new church built in a more central position, so as to accommodate the population who adhered to the principles of the Free Church of Scotland, from the town of Leslie, as well as those from the adjacent village of Prinlawa, and the present site was selected accordingly. Not the less sensible, however, were the Free Church adherents of the kindness of Mr. Fergus, who, though not himself a

member of their communion, proved himself friendly in many ways, continuing Mr. Laird's salary for some years after his settlement as minister in Leslie, and accommodating him with a free house until a manse was erected, not many years before his death.

The new congregation in Leslie being organised, Mr. Laird was unanimously elected pastor, and ordained over them on the third day of October 1843. How he looked back on his past work, and forward to his future labours, we learn from a letter addressed to a member of his new flock, in which, after acknowledging some tokens of friendship, which had been sent him, he says:—

“I heartily respond to the wish expressed in your note, that I may have comfort in using the ‘bands,’ which I take to be a wish that my labours may be blessed and my ministry successful. This would certainly be a *real* comfort both to pastor and people, and would render the bond about to be formed tenfold more close and happy. I feel my present position to be very solemn, and trust I have the prayers of the Lord's people in this place, that, ‘as my days, so my strength may be,’ and that ‘God would open to me a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ.’ I think, without boasting (for I mention it to the praise of *God's* grace), I may say that I have already had

some tokens of success, and these, however small, I feel inclined to regard as signs that I am not altogether 'running unsent,' or 'going a warfare on my own charges,' but I trust that we are soon to see 'far greater things than we have yet seen.' My prayer shall be, that the cloud which at present is no bigger than a man's hand, may spread till it cover the whole spiritual heavens, and send down a plenteous rain to refresh God's weary heritage."

There is not much incident or variety in the life of a Scottish pastor. Several years having now elapsed since Mr. Laird's course was ended, many of those things which might at the period of his death have been put on record regarding his ministry, have now escaped the memory of those who knew him best and loved him most. In the absence of any journal of his own, the task of presenting at this period any full portraiture of the ministry of one who may be indeed regarded as a MODEL PASTOR, is a difficult one.

"It is reported," writes an eminent father of our Church, "that there grows among a certain class of youthful talented preachers the practice of delivering not only unwritten but even unstudied discourses. In this way, a person with a few *commonplaces* of theology floating in his memory, *and certain passages* of Scripture, fine in them-

selves, if not spoiled by nauseating repetitions of them, and palpable misapplications—thus furnished, and with a moderate fluency of speech, and more than a moderate measure of assurance, one may get through the work, and for a time win to be popular among the injudicious, though dash and defect characterise their superficial performances." It was far otherwise with the subject of this sketch.

Seldom did we ever meet with one who was so deeply impressed with the importance and duty of thorough and diligent preparation for the work of the pulpit. Oft have we heard him quote with peculiar emphasis M'Cheyne's well-known remark, "Beaten oil for the sanctuary." His preaching was peculiarly impressive. His sermons were full of Scriptural truth, illustrated in a way calculated at once to interest and instruct. Christ was the pervading theme of them all; and, while he bore in mind that his audiences had *understandings* to be addressed, he also remembered that they had *affections* to be appealed to, and *consciences* to be reached. A co-presbyter remarks, in reference to his preaching, "Its combined simplicity, massiveness, and tenderness imparted a peculiar charm to it." The spirit by which he was actuated in going to the pulpit will be shown by the following characteristic anecdote. He had

gone one Sabbath evening to preach in a neighbouring congregation. On entering the session-house, he was accosted by an office-bearer, who told him that there was a great crowd assembled to hear him, and that he hoped he would preach well, as a *good* sermon was expected. Looking at the speaker with great seriousness, and raising his right hand, as he often did when about to express strong inward emotion, Mr. Laird replied, "I trust I shall be enabled to preach as with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven."

Referring to his powers as a preacher, one who sat under him for nine years, and became an office-bearer in his congregation, thus writes:—"When I heard him first, my attention was completely arrested by his earnest and impressive manner, and during all the time he was my minister his influence over me ever increased. Many are the pleasurable emotions I experience, as I take a retrospective view of this period, and remember how he unfolded the Gospel plan of salvation in all its attractiveness and beauty. At the time when I was first brought under his influence, I was little beyond the period of boyhood, and, with a mind naturally sceptical, it was well Providence placed me under the ministry of one who was able to *show me the way of God* more perfectly. No one *has ever demonstrated* more clearly to my mind the

Divine origin of the Christian system than he did. His sermons were of a highly doctrinal character, but very unlike the dry disquisitions of abstract truth one often hears from the pulpit. There was a vitality in all he said, and it was ever his aim to hold forth a living personal Saviour for the sinner's acceptance. There was one subject to which he often alluded—the *necessity of an atonement*—and the manner in which he treated it was satisfactory to my mind. Well do I remember the language he often used in prayer, 'O Lord, thou canst not clear the guilty, thine unspotted holiness and inflexible justice stand as barriers in the way, but blessed be thy name, thou hast devised a way by which thou canst clear the guilty, and be the justifier of the ungodly who believe.'

"In 1846, when I read in the 'First Impressions of England and its People,' the controversy on this subject,* I liked it all the more that, dur-

* The reference here is to a discussion on the atonement, which the late Hugh Miller records as taking place between himself and some travellers whom he met in an inn at Newcastle. His remarks in vindication of the Calvinistic view on this subject were wound up by the following observations:—"Of God's moral nature, or the conduct which springs out of it, we can but know what God has been pleased to tell us: the fact of the atonement can be determined but by revelation, and revelation determines it very conclusively. But if fact it be, then must we hold that it is a fact which springs

ing the four previous years, my minister had often handled it in the same way."

The last day will declare many fruits of such a ministry, since, to use the words of an elder in the congregation, "many are alive who either directly owed their spiritual birth to him or the nursing of their spiritual infancy. One of these, an old man, used to sit Sabbath after Sabbath with his ear-horn drinking spiritual nourishment from the much-loved lips. Sixty godless years had passed over his head, till this devoted servant of God was made the instrument of drawing him out of darkness. Beside him, at the pulpit-foot, sat another aged disciple, also a fruit of his ministry. The former entered into rest a few months before his revered pastor, and enjoyed the privilege of his visits on his dying bed. The other outlived him six or seven years."

There was one feature in his discourses which all who were privileged to hear them will remember. They were frequently enriched with quotations from the old authors, in whose writings he greatly delighted, and from which he made nume-

directly out of that underived moral nature of God which constitutes the governing law of his power and will; and *that his nature being what it is, the antagonist fact of remission without atonement is, in reality, an impossibility.*"—*First Impressions of England*, p. 9.

rous extracts in his commonplace book, while he transferred them also to the tablet of his memory, from which he reproduced them in the most fitting way.

What gave peculiar power to his preaching, and what, indeed, was the grand secret of the hold which he took not only of his own people but of all of every denomination with whom he was brought into contact, as well as of the sweet savour which everywhere attaches to his memory, was *his deep and fervent piety*. He not only "preached," but "lived Christ." All who heard, and all who mingled with him, felt that he was keeping near the Great Head and King of Zion, and that the words which his lips spake concerning the Saviour, flowed from a heart which was filled with a sweet sense of His love and presence.

From the commencement of his labours as a missionary at Prinlaws, Mr. Laird conducted a weekly prayer meeting, which he regularly maintained till the close of his ministry. He has often told us that he felt much drawn out on these occasions, and was able to speak with more freedom to souls than he could sometimes do in the pulpit. He had the joy of seeing several fellowship meetings formed among the people in different districts of the parish.

One who knew him well says: "As an every-

day minister he excelled." He was remarkable for his attention in waiting on the sick and dying, while he regularly engaged in the visitation of the families of his flock from house to house. In the course of his efforts in these departments of pastoral duty the Lord was often pleased to own him with tokens of success. We remember his narrating one instance of this. In the course of visiting one day, he came to the threshold of a very careless family, with whom he had often in former times in vain expostulated. He felt as he stood at the door—"my going in will be of no use"—and was on the point of turning away, when the thought was immediately presented to his mind,—that such a feeling could not come from the Lord. He accordingly went forward in the path of duty. He spoke to the inmates from Isa. lv. 6: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." A few days after one of the members of the household called on him with the arrow of conviction in her heart, saying, "that little word *while* will give me no rest;" and he soon after rejoiced over her as a "brand plucked out of the burning." While engaged in the work of visitation he gave away much to the poor. The more wretched the family the greater the claim they seemed to have on his sympathy and prayers. His constant visits to a very poor family, all laid low by malignant typhus fever,

attracted the notice of many, who felt that it was only the Spirit of the Master which would have made him willing to expose himself in such a case. Many were the instances of his private benevolence, known only to those who were the recipients of it. Through the medium of a member of his session, many articles of clothing, not greatly worn, passed to be remodelled for the use of young lads, who otherwise would have had little chance of attending religious meetings or public worship. Some, now usefully and honourably engaged in life's business, could tell of the assistance rendered them in the prosecution of their studies.

As illustrative of the concern which he felt in the individual cases of his flock, as well as of his ability in ministering to the afflicted, we may here give a few extracts from some of his letters, written at different periods. These are now almost the only available source from which it is possible to present him to others, as his feelings and views are drawn by his own pen. Writing to a young man in his congregation, he says—

“ You speak of being placed among those who hold doctrines opposite to such as you had received. I hope you will never feel ashamed of the doctrine of Christ (Gal. i. 9). Seek to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you ; and then you will know in your-

self that if any speak against *his* work, it is because there is no light and no truth in them.

“ ‘Combe’s Constitution of Man’ I regard as a dangerous book. There is just enough of truth in it to make the error, with which it abounds, ensnaring to many minds. It is essentially infidel in its spirit and in its tendency, and all the more dangerous, inasmuch as its infidelity is not openly avowed.” (Col. ii. 8).

To a widow who had recently lost her husband, we find him writing:—

“ It was only yesterday that I heard of Mr. B. being worse than usual, and this morning I have the sad announcement of his death. I shall endeavour to see you soon ; but cannot refrain in the meantime from expressing my sympathy with you all in this season of trial. I trust and pray that the gracious Lord will be with you, and prove ‘ a very present help in trouble.’ I have no doubt but you will feel much anxiety as you look forward to the future, with such a family around and under you ; but ‘ cast *all* thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee.’ A—— and I——, I trust, will prove comforts to you, and helps also. Tell J—— from me, that I hope he will always fear God, and be kind to his mother and sisters : *this is not only his duty, but will bring upon him-*

self the blessing of the Lord, which maketh rich, and which has no sorrow added to it."

His skill as a "son of consolation" appears in a few lines of condolence addressed by him to the Rev. Mr. Macara of Strathmiglo, on the occasion of a severe family bereavement.

"Leslie, 8th Jan. 1852.

"I was very sorry to receive intimation of the death of your son ; and, reluctant though I am to intrude at a time like this, I cannot refrain from expressing my sympathy with you and Mrs. Macara under this new bereavement.

"I had heard of your son's illness, but had hoped that his sickness had not been 'unto death.' The Sovereign Disposer of all has otherwise ordered it ; and I have no doubt that, however difficult the attainment, you are enabled in some measure to say, 'It is well'—'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.' I was happy to learn that He who, 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' perfects praise, seems to have revealed to your son the things of the kingdom.

"I think David spoke not of the grave merely, but of heaven too, when he said, on the death of his child, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' At all events, apart altogether

from the general question of infant salvation, there is every reason why believing parents, who have cast their children on their own covenant God, should be comforted when they are taken away. 'He is not dead but sleepeth—thy son shall rise again,'—are the words which you may hear addressed to you by Him who is the 'Resurrection and the Life.' But I need not remind *you* where your comfort and strength are lodged, and from whom alone they can come. It is meet to do as the disciples of John did when their master was dead—to 'go and tell Jesus;' for '*Jesus wept.*' 'We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'"

Mr. Laird endeared himself to his brethren in all his intercourse with them. "I always admired," says the Rev. Mr. Knight of Wemyss, "his modest, unassuming bearing in the Presbytery, associated as it was with that deep-seated regard for the sacred interests of truth, which was blended with the right kind of charity towards others. That much to be desired union of Christian love, with zeal for truth, and keen abhorrence of all that is dishonouring to God, which appeared so brightly in the character of the apostle John, *was, I think, given in no small degree to him.*"

As regards the punctual fulfilment of ministerial engagements, none was more to be depended on

than the subject of this sketch. The spring of 1844 beheld a sudden and severe snow storm towards the end of a week. Henry Laird was engaged as his father's assistant on the Sabbath, which was the communion at Portmoak. So heavy was the fall of snow, that on the Sabbath morning it was resolved to postpone the service, as comparatively few could make their way to the church. A messenger was despatched to Leslie, to prevent the minister leaving home and exposing himself to the storm. After buffeting the tempest for a little, he came to the conclusion that the young pastor would never attempt setting out in such a day, and returned to his own comfortable fireside at Scotland-well. But what was his amazement, soon after, when he saw his old minister's son passing his window on horseback, for nothing could daunt his spirit, or prevent him fulfilling an engagement, if within the bounds of possibility. On the Monday following he rode ten miles to Auchtermuchty, to officiate on our Thanksgiving-day, though the public conveyances on the road were stopped, and all trace of the usual pathway was obliterated, and in spite of entreaties to remain all night, insisted on returning home after the service was over, arguing that there might be more snow that night, and the roads worse on the *morrow*.

CHAPTER IV.

SUMMER TOURS.

"His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to Heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, 'My Father made them all.'"

HUGH MILLER speaks of "the journeys undertaken for purposes of relaxation, in that state of indifferent health, and consequent languor, which an overstrain of the mental faculties usually induces." The hard-working minister knows something of the languor here spoken of, and a summer tour is one of the best remedies for its removal. None needed such annual seasons of relaxation more than Henry Laird, whose unremitting labours in his Master's service could not but tell with a depressing influence on his physical energies. He had all the requisites to the full enjoyment of such holiday *trips, and he used to return from them to his labours in Leslie with renewed vigour of body and mind.*

He was a great admirer of nature—loving fine scenery, and looking up from nature, not only to nature's God, but to the God of Revelation, finding illustrations of the Word in the works on which he gazed. One summer we travelled together through Perthshire to Inverness, and thence to Strathpeffer, returning by the west of Scotland. We happened to be at Inverness during an important jury trial, at which a great number of Highland drovers were examined as witnesses. The inns were very much crowded, and during night we got little sleep owing to the continued noise made by some of the strangers from the north, who were quartered in a room above the double-bedded one where we slept. My companion, however, took this disturbance very calmly, remarking, "We're better off than our Master; *for He had not where to lay His head.*" Another summer we made a run for a few days to the north, to Dunkeld, Pitlochry, Logierait, Aberfeldy, and Kenmore. When he started on this tour, he was far from well, but improved greatly during the course of it. Being of a very cheerful and lively disposition, he enjoyed exceedingly the diversity of character we met at the successive stages of our journey. As we ascended the hill leading to the Falls of Moness, and heard the distant and never-ceasing sound of the water, he remarked—"How forcibly does this bring to min

the passage, 'His voice was as *the sound of many waters.*'" His abhorrence of anything mean and dishonourable came out very strongly when we visited Taymouth Castle. Two travellers, unsolicited by us, joined our company, and one guide conducted us through the grounds. On coming out from the dairy, he remarked to me that our companions had given no *douceur* to the servant who showed us it, saying that it was evident they were about to see all the wonders of the Marquis's seat under cover of *our* contributions,—“which,” he added—“is very dishonourable.” When we left our guide to re-enter Kenmore, he stepped forward, and giving him the usual gratuity said, with much emphasis, “This is for my friend and myself,”—a very clear intimation to the *attachés* of our party that they must settle accounts for themselves. He was a most pleasant travelling companion, and never will those who were with him on the tours to which I have referred forget the humour often visible on his countenance amid the many little incidents in which the pleasure of travelling greatly consists. We sojourned for a few days under the hospitable roof of the Rev. Athol Stuart of Blair-Athol, who was more than amazed one afternoon, when pointing to a hill above Shierglass, where he *then resided*, and remarking that we might have *ascended it*, but he feared it would be too much

for Mr. Laird's strength, he was met by this announcement—"For my strength! I will climb the hill as fast as any of you,"—a feat which he forthwith performed, getting to the top before any of us. On our way to Inverness we had an amusing scene at Aviemore, which the pastor of Leslie used often to recount in after times, stating how much he had enjoyed it. The coach by which we travelled was well filled, which, owing to the weather, had not been the case for some days before. The proprietors of the inn, not expecting so large a company to dinner, had failed to make any preparation for the arrival of a dozen travellers, whose appetites were whetted by the strong mountain air through which they had been driving. A scene of extraordinary disappointment and confusion ensued,—and the allotted "twenty minutes" having soon expired, and the guard's horn being blown, we had to resume our seats on "the Duke of Wellington," reproaching the driver for mal-information in assuring us, as we drove up to the hotel door, that "Aviemore was a first-rate place for dining at."

These simple incidents in the course of summer travels will be sufficient to recal him to the memory of all who knew him as the cheerful happy Christian, whose whole demeanour was calculated to recommend to others the Gospel of which he was an ambassador. It was indeed in the private

tercourse of life, such as was enjoyed on occasions similar to those referred to in this chapter, that one felt the truth of a remark made in reference to him—that “there were a *sunshine* and warmth about him which intimate friends only could appreciate, but which it would be difficult to describe.”

CHAPTER V.

MINISTRY AMONG THE YOUNG.

"In early days the conscience has in most
A quickness which in later life is lost"

MR. LAIRD was eminently successful in his MINISTRY AMONG THE YOUNG. He possessed a remarkable power of speaking to the lambs of the flock, and numerous were the demands made on him for sermons and addresses to them from all the surrounding district, as well as from parts of the country more distant. "It was in this department of ministerial duty," writes a co-presbyter, "that, so far as I could judge, he seemed to excel. He had a very peculiar gift in the way of making Divine Truth interesting and attractive to the youthful mind. I do not know if his discourses to the young were fully written out, or how they may read. But certainly, as *delivered* from his own warm heart and earnest soul, they were most effective, and many old people, after hearing him, used to say, 'we wish we often heard such preaching.'" His compliance with the numerous call

to preach to the young which reached him from his brethren, did not make him neglectful of the lambs of his own flock. *These* shared much of his attention. To this day there is in Leslie a warm remembrance of his weekly visits to the Day School, and the kindly word he had for each. The cheerfulness which lit up the faces of the young when he entered among them, his familiar mode of speaking to them, the power he had of keeping the most perfect order by the holding up of his hand, which we almost think we see now as we pen these lines, all told of the influence he had over the youthful mind. Precious are the mementoes of his many labours among them, by means of Sabbath Schools and adult classes, quarterly sermons, and missionary meetings specially for their behoof. His method of conducting his adult class, appears from the following note, which I received from him on one occasion when we had exchanged pulpits.

“I trust the Master himself will come with you, and will put words in your mouth whereby souls shall be benefited. I am sorry the weather is again changed for the worse. The roads, I fear, will be very bad to-morrow, which tends to make thin churches, but if there be two or three, and our *gracious Lord* one of the number, there will be no *complaint that the meetings are poor*. If not

fatigued, it would be an additional favour if you would keep my adult class for a short while. It meets immediately after worship in the afternoon. The lessons for Sabbath are Heb. v., to be read by the class, and explained to them, and the fifth and sixth questions of the Shorter Catechism. There is also a doctrine to be proved, "Christ's kingly office," but my plan with the doctrine of late, has been merely to give it out, and leave it with the class to write out the proof passages at home. At present we are going through a course on 'the Person and Offices of Christ.' If you keep the class, be so good as give out as the last of the course, 'Christ is the Head of the Church, and Head over all things to the Church.' Tell the class that this is the last of the present course of doctrines, and I expect them to give in the whole in writing the next Sabbath we meet."

In this department of his ministry, Mr. Laird laboured not in vain.

"One of the first-fruits of his ministry," writes one of his former flock, "was a young woman, a member of his class, who was seriously impressed at a prayer meeting, the subject of the address being 'The treasure hid in the field.' In prayer he pleaded much for those who might be seeking the Saviour with tears; and such she realized to be so truly her own case, that she was induced to apply

to him for direction and counsel. He earnestly urged the necessity of constant prayer that the Spirit might take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto her. She was long an invalid, and Mr. Laird visited her regularly during her illness, which in the end proved fatal, but not till she had found peace. To another member of his class who was on her death-bed, his visits were very refreshing. He reminded her, and an intimate companion, that they had heard much about Christ, but that would not save them. They must be in Christ, for to such there is no condemnation, no wrath, no second death. He besought them to 'go to the foot of the cross, crying, 'if I perish, I will perish here,' though, blessed be God, none ever perished or could perish there.' He helped them much by his counsel as well as by his prayers, often dwelling on the importance of choosing good company, and pressing the exercise of charity in judging of others. 'If no good can be said, then remain silent,' was a favourite advice of his, and one faithfully acted on by himself. Another who benefited by his ministrations was particularly aroused by hearing an address from the prayer of the thief on the cross. There was one young man in whom he took a deep interest, and whom he *had much pleasure* in visiting on his deathbed. *The regard they manifested for each other was*

great, and Mr. Laird often spoke of the last time he saw him, when he was unable to speak, but his last look signified, 'we'll meet again.' One who gives satisfactory evidence of being in Christ, told me of being deeply impressed one evening at the class, when the question, 'What is effectual calling?' was being explained. Mr. Laird entreated them all to go to their knees when they retired, and pray over the question, substituting the singular number throughout, and her feeling was, 'if she had had the whole world, she would willingly have resigned it to be able heartily to do so.' About twenty of the members of the class formed a prayer meeting, which was attended with no small measure of success. Some returned to the world, but many remained steadfast."

Such is the tribute given to the success of his ministry among the young, by one who was herself a member of his Female Classes. One who was privileged to attend his Young Men's Class, says,

"Amid his multitudinous labours, he did not overlook the young men of his congregation. He met with them in the manse at first on the Sabbath evenings, and latterly during the week. At these meetings the Confession of Faith, and the Epistles to the Romans and Hebrews, were the subjects of exposition, and never shall we forget the views of *Divine Truth* then presented to our mind." The

appreciation of his labours by those who enjoyed them, was indicated by occasional marks of their love presented to him. His feelings on these occasions are expressed in two letters addressed by him in acknowledgment of such gifts.

“Leslie, 3d January 1850.

“MY DEAR FRIENDS,—I received your very handsome and quite unexpected New Year's gift on Monday evening, and would now express my warmest thanks for your kind acknowledgment of my labours among you. Although ‘I seek not yours but you,’ be assured I accept of your present with much gratification, especially because I am disposed to regard it as an intimation from you that the exercises of the class have been profitable to your souls.

“It has been my endeavour to promote your true edification, not to amuse you with trifles or useless speculations, but to inform your minds with respect to the great things of the Law and of the Gospel, and to impress your hearts with a sense of the supreme importance of the ‘great salvation.’ If it please God to spare me, it shall still, and I trust more than ever, be my aim to advance your highest good, by frequently ‘stirring *up your minds* by way of remembrance,’ and lead-

ing you forward to new attainments in the knowledge of the Divine oracles.

“From the first, I have felt it a pleasant duty to meet with you at the Sabbath evening class. I have reason to believe that a few, at least, have received saving impressions at it. Some of these may have removed to other places, or may have gone to their ‘long home;’ and some, it may be, are still present with us. Did I know of but one such case, I would feel myself rewarded for any labour I have bestowed upon you; but, my dear friends, I would fain hope things that accompany salvation, with respect to not a few of your number; yea, my heart’s desire for you *all* is, that you may be saved. In entering on the duties of another year, let me request that I may be encouraged by a regular attendance on the part of you all, even as I have all along been by the punctuality and attention of many among you.

“In conclusion, I would most heartily join with you in praying that the gentle showers of grace, and the genial breezes of the Holy Spirit, may accompany all the exercises of the class, so that the Word of Life may be felt in its sweetness and in its power; and so that you may all grow in the knowledge of Jesus, whilst I am made glad by seeing and hearing that you ‘walk in the truth.’

“With many prayers that better than earthly

blessings may rest upon you all,—I am your most affectionate Pastor.”

The second of these letters was penned a very short time before his death—an event anticipated neither by himself nor by those to whom he wrote :—

“ Leslie, January 2, 1852.

“ MY DEAR FRIENDS,—Your New Year’s present I received yesterday morning. It was altogether unexpected, but not on that account less acceptable. I need not say that I highly appreciate your kindness, and that I take this new expression of your esteem as an additional incitement to aim at your highest good, as well as a pledge on your part that spiritual instruction is what you most of all desire to obtain.

“ Allow me to say, that I value your gift all the more on account of the judicious selection of books which you have made. There are two great volumes in which God reveals himself to man—the one is the volume of Creation, and the other that of Revelation. The former is sufficiently clear in what it teaches of God, to leave all men ‘without excuse,’ (Rom. i. 20); but the latter can alone disclose the way of a sinner’s salvation. As a help *to the interpretation* of the volume of Creation, *in at least one* department of its discoveries, there

is no book to which I would assign a higher place than 'Miller's Footprints,' and as an aid to the interpretation of the volume of inspiration, 'Fairbairn's Typology' may now be regarded as a standard work. If to the two volumes I have mentioned I should add a third—the volume of Providence—then in 'Hetherington's History' there is contained a faithful narration of the doings of God in His providence in behalf of the Church of our fathers. An eminent servant of God used to say, that he read the newspapers to see how his heavenly Father was governing the world; much more may 'Hetherington's History of the Church of Scotland' be read to see how Jesus, as the exalted Head, superintends all the affairs of His Church on earth, supports His martyrs and confessors in testifying for His name, and overrules all things for the advancement of His own gracious purposes.

"The three works with which you have kindly presented me, are thus devoted to the interpretation of three distinct volumes—Creation, Revelation, and Providence. 'Miller's Footprints' traces God in one department of those works of His which are all so great—sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. 'Fairbairn's Typology' traces Christ and the Gospel in all the types of the *Old Testament*, and shows how completely, in the

grace and truth which have come by Jesus Christ, we have a counterpart to the figures and shadows that have passed away. And then Hetherington's interesting work traces the hand of God in the history of the Church of our fathers—showing that He, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, takes special care of His Church, overturns the desire of her enemies, and brings her forth out of all her troubles, 'fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners.'

'But without saying more, I have again to thank you for your kind expression of goodwill and esteem. At this season, when others are sending their congratulations to their friends, I have nothing better to wish on your behalf than what John wished on behalf of his well-beloved Gaius, (3 John v. 2).

"With respect to each of you, my earnest wish is that your souls may prosper, and be in health. 'I have no greater joy than to hear that you walk in the truth.'—Believe me to be your affectionate Pastor."

Mr. Laird's two last public services were in connexion with *the young*. On the evening of the last Sabbath of his ministry at Lealie, he *preached to the Sabbath scholars in Kinglassie, and on the following Tuesday went to Alva to*

address the annual meeting of the young in connexion with the flock of the Rev. Thomas W. Brown, who has kindly favoured us with the following statement, in connexion with what proved the winding up of Mr. Laird's public labours :—

“ After the lapse of eight years, my impression of his visit is much less vivid than it was at the time, deepened as that impression was by his subsequent death. I remember well, however, that, although labouring under physical depression, induced by too abundant exertions in Dundee and elsewhere just before, he was exceedingly cheerful, and the conversation which we had together was full of interest. He came on the forenoon of Tuesday, and left next morning, so that I did not see much of him then ; but his entire bearing was that of a single-minded and upright servant of Christ. At the evening meeting he spoke to the children from those words in Acts xi. 26, ‘ A whole year.’ His address was very effective, and was listened to with the deepest attention, both by old and young.

“ A gratifying circumstance resulting from Mr. Laird's visit, I may here mention. Having occasion to be in Burntisland during the summer following, I picked up in a bookseller's shop a copy of the address just alluded to. I read it with deep emotion, and thinking that in this new form it

might be of service to some whose hearts had not been reached by it before, I forwarded it to one of the teachers of the Sabbath-school, desiring him to state the circumstances to the children at their meeting next Lord's day, and to read the discourse in whole or in part in their hearing. This was done according to my wish, and I heard no more of it. But not long since a Christian young man, who in 1852 was in my Sabbath-school, and is now a Sabbath-School teacher in Glasgow, asked me, in the course of conversation, if I remembered the above facts, and then stated that the public reading of Mr. Laird's sermon, in connexion with his previous visit and early death, was blessed of God to awaken a train of thought which ultimately issued (as he believed) in his conversion. Thus our lamented friend, being dead, yet spake."

CHAPTER VI.

CLOSING DAYS.

"Servant of God, well done,
Rest from thy loved employ:
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy.

The voice at midnight came,
He started up to hear,
A mortal arrow pierced his heart,
He fell, but felt no fear."

THE physical frame of the pastor of Leslie was by no means robust, yet he seldom had a silent Sabbath during his nine years' ministry. We have already seen, from the notices of the previous chapter, how busily engaged he was up to the very moment when the hand of the Lord was laid on him. He had often been remonstrated with by brethren and friends against undertaking an amount of engagements, which seemed to them far beyond his strength. His great acceptability led to many demands being made on him, while his willingness to work in his Master's service, and his *readiness to oblige*, prompted an affirmative answer

to many calls, which a prudent regard to his own health would have led him to decline. For some months previous to his death he had, however, suffered greatly from weakness. He was asked to take charge of the Presbyterian Church at Gibraltar during the last winter of his life, but after consulting with his friends he did not deem it his duty to accede to the request.

In returning home from Alva, he attended a meeting of Presbytery at Kirkcaldy, and his appearance there is thus referred to by Mr. Forman of Leven :—"The last time I saw him was on the Wednesday of the week before his death. We sat next to one another at the dinner-table, and observing that he ate sparingly, I ascertained that he felt very poorly. On pressing some further inquiries, I found that he had been pursuing an almost unintermitting round of labours in preaching, addressing meetings, and exhorting Sabbath-schools. I anxiously urged him on his return to Leslie, to take advice, and especially to devote a time to entire rest. The following week brought me the intimation that my dear and valued young friend had indeed entered upon his rest, but it was 'the rest which remaineth for the people of God'—the holy and blessed repose of those who 'rest from their labours, and whose works do follow them.' "

When he reached Leslie that night, it was to lie down on the couch from which he never rose. A slight attack of fever seemed to threaten no fatal result. On the Thursday of the following week, he was visited by Mr. Spiers of Kinglassie, with whom he conversed chiefly on the subject of his people and the supply of his pulpit. His brother-in-law, Mr. Swinton of Portmoak, was with him later in the evening, and left him under the fond impression that his indisposition was only of a temporary nature, and would soon pass away. The servant in the manse having been ailing, had been that day removed to her mother's house, and so little was any change to the worse anticipated, that his sisters were alone with him that night. Towards midnight a perceptible alteration took place, and on the arrival of Dr. Baillie of Markinch, who was promptly sent for, it was evident that his strength was inadequate to cope with the disease. In a few hours, the spirit of Henry Laird passed to be with Jesus. He died at three o'clock on the morning of Friday, 6th Feb., 1852.

He was scarcely able to leave any dying testimony; but such was not needed. His life was a witness to his faith and holiness. Among other short sentences which he ejaculated, was one in which he requested his sisters to let his brother in the *ministry*, Mr Forman, know how much benefited

he had been by a conversation with him some time before. "This," says Mr Forman, "was probably a conversation which occurred between us a few months before his death. He had preached for me at Leven, and in the evening, when others had retired to rest, we prolonged a conversation on which we had previously entered. Personal religion, in its anxious importance, occupied the earlier part of it, but gradually we had transferred ourselves to the responsibilities, the difficulties, and encouragements of the Christian ministry, and so deeply engrossed were we that when one of us looked his watch, we found that it was beyond three o'clock in the morning. But I had many conversations with him, and I need not say how refreshing and profitable. For though he was naturally modest and retiring, yet when, in the confidence of friendship, he unbosomed himself without reserve, all who enjoyed his intimacy know what fervour of piety, combined with ripeness of judgment, pervaded his discourse."

Deep, indeed, was the mourning, not only among the members of his own flock, but throughout the entire population of Leslie, when the tidings spread next day that Henry Laird was no more. The grief experienced in Leslie was shared *throughout all the surrounding district; and many a tear was shed by old and young with whom his*

name was associated with all that was "lovely and of good report."

On the Sabbath after his death, the hymn to be repeated in the Sabbath-school, according to the yearly "Scheme of Lessons," prepared by his own hand, was the 43d paraphrase, "You now must hear my voice no more." The teachers were greatly struck by the coincidence, and the desire was powerfully felt that suitable improvement of it should be made to the children, but all were so deeply affected that none were able to do it.

When the funeral day arrived, the depth of feeling occasioned by his sudden removal was manifested both by the large attendance of ministers and others, and by the emotion visible in the church, where service was conducted by Mr. Couper of Burntisland, as well as in the manse. The long line of mourners, who bore the remains of the departed to their resting-place in the family burying ground in Portmoak, presented a scene which reminded many of the record of Stephen's burial, when we are told that "they made great lamentation over him."

To a weeping and much-affected congregation, this mournful event was improved on the following Sabbath in two funeral sermons, preached by the Rev. Dr. Alexander of Kirkcaldy, and the Rev. Mr. Murray of Newburgh. The esteem felt for his memory in other corners of the vineyard w

appear from the following incident in connection with Mr. Murray's sermon:—Mr. Laird was the originator of a meeting of several brethren in the ministry for fellowship and prayer. It was held periodically in one another's manses during the day, there being a meeting in the church in the evening, when addresses on various subjects were delivered. This meeting fell to be held at Auchtermuchty two days after his funeral sermon was preached. From his having been so frequently among my people, it was arranged that Mr. Murray should deliver in my pulpit on the Tuesday evening the sermon preached by him on the preceding Sabbath at Leslie. This arrangement was so appreciated by my flock, that we had that evening a very large attendance, and many were in tears as they listened to the touching delineation of the character of one whose frequent presence among them on Sacramental and other occasions was always highly valued.

The estimate which Mr. Laird's co-presbyters formed of his personal character and public ministry, is attested in the following minute, drawn up by them after his death:—

"The Presbytery records, with deep sorrow, the loss it has sustained in the death of the late Henry Moncrieff Laird of Leslie.

"*'The memory of the just is blessed.' It is not in the spirit of eulogy towards one whose*

gular delicacy and modesty of mind would have made him shrink from any tribute to himself, that his brethren feel called upon to register a few characteristics of their departed friend. It is as a memorial that may benefit them or others who shall succeed them in the ministry of the Gospel. The Presbytery feels that it has got a precious legacy in "the memory," while the brother who bequeathed it has been taken away. He was eminently characterised by a simplicity and godly sincerity transparent in all his character and demeanour. There was conjoined with this a uniform chasteness and propriety of conduct, preserving the ministerial in deportment even when most withdrawn from the peculiar offices of a minister. He seemed always to live near to the Holy of Holies. His kindness, his amiability, his promptness to oblige, his ready mind to every good work, were personal qualities which better preserve themselves in the hearts of his brethren than on the mere page of an unconscious record. But it is specially as a devoted and laborious minister of the Gospel that his brethren feel privileged to cherish his memory.

"In labours more abundant, inscribed itself, if on any ministry, specially on his. With a frame not the most robust, he probably was not surpassed by any of his brethren in the multitude and assid-

duity of his labours. He signally illustrated the record, 'preach the Word,' be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.' His brethren, his own congregation, the congregations generally of the district, have not forgotten the impressive and refreshing appeals which often fell from his lips in the pulpit—refreshing, for they breathed the very soul of christian fervour and scriptural simplicity. In happy harmony with the general tenor of his ministry, it scarcely sustained an arrest till its very close. He was pursuing his manifold and assiduous duties when his Master said, It is enough: Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. The Presbytery bows to the Divine dispensation, and it desires to conclude this brief sketch in the terms of apostolic acknowledgment: 'We thank God, in every remembrance of our brother, for the exceeding grace of God in him.'

"Kirkcaldy, 31st March 1852."

On a tablet to his memory, in the Free Church of Leslie, is engraved the following inscription :—

ERECTED
IN MEMORY OF THE
REV. H. M. LAIRD,
FIRST FREE CHURCH MINISTER OF LESLIE,
WHO DIED 6TH FEBRUARY 1852,
IN THE 35TH YEAR OF HIS AGE, AND 9TH OF HIS MINISTRY.

WALKING WITH GOD, AND BEING FERVENT IN THE SPIRIT,
HE SPAKE AND TAUGHT DILIGENTLY THE THINGS OF
THE LORD.

THE MEEKNESS OF WISDOM, AND THE GENTLENESS OF
CHRIST,

MADE HIM LOVELY IN HIS LIFE;
IN THE REDEEMER HE RESTED AT DEATH
IN THE HOPE OF A GLORIOUS
RESURRECTION.

FOR HE WAS A GOOD MAN, AND FULL OF THE
HOLY GHOST AND OF FAITH,
AND MUCH PEOPLE WAS ADDED UNTO THE LORD.

“THY WILL BE DONE.”

To the foregoing tributes little need be added here. There was in the "brother beloved," whose early removal so many mourn, a singular-combination of many admirable qualities both of mind and heart, and these so well poised as to make up a character of great beauty and worth. With remarkable kindness and gentleness of manner were blended great firmness and decision, and most uncompromising stedfastness in defence of God's truth. Even the men of the world, who thought him too strict, could not but respect and admire his consistency of character, while the urbanity of his disposition disarmed prejudice and won the esteem of all classes of the community. In taking a retrospective glance of the foregoing sketch, and recalling to memory and putting on record the many traits of excellence by which he was distinguished, "let us look to what God was pleased to make him, that all the glory may be given to the Divine workman."

Part II.

I. ROOM IN CHRIST AND IN HEAVEN FOR ALL
WHO SEEK THE LORD EARLY.

II. A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE.

THE first of these addresses to the young was printed during Mr. Laird's lifetime, for private distribution ; and the second, as will be seen from the prefatory note, was published soon after his death. They are again presented to the public, in the belief that those who heard them delivered, or perused them some years ago, may value them in their present form.

J. R.

ROOM IN CHRIST AND IN HEAVEN FOR ALL WHO SEEK THE LORD EARLY.

“And yet there is room.”—LUKE xiv. 22.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,—I have been sent to bid you all to a great feast—a feast made by a great King. The sheep and oxen are killed ; every thing needed at the feast is prepared ; and I am bid tell you to come and eat, for all things are ready. But before pressing you to come to this great feast, I must explain what I mean ; and this I shall do by the following parable.

There was once a rich man, who made a great supper, and asked a great many people to come and eat of it. When supper time had come, he sent his servant to put the guests in mind, and to say to them, Come, for all things are now ready ; but they would not come ; and what kind of excuses do you think they made ? One said, I have bought some land, and I would like first to go and see it ; another said, I have bought some oxen, and I must go and prove them—try how they will plough ; and a third said, I have married a wife, and therefore I

cannot come. None of these men would come to ~~the~~ King's supper. Some were farmers, and they pretended that they could not leave their farms so long; others were merchants, and they would not leave their counting-houses; and others again were taken up with family cares, and they too wished to be let off. They all made excuses. The servant came home and told his master that the guests despised his invitation, and would not come to his supper. Then the King was very angry, and told his servant to run out quickly "into the streets and lanes of the city," and to bring in all the poor and miserable objects he could find. So the servant did as he was bid, and then came back again to his master and said, I have done as thou didst bid me, "and yet there is room." Then the King told him to go out to the highways and hedges, and meet the labourers as they were returning from their work, weary and tired, and to compel—that is, to press and persuade—them to come in, that his house might be filled; for, said the King, none of those men who were first bidden shall taste of my supper.

Now, my young friends, this is a parable, and I daresay most of you know what it means. God is *the rich man* I have been speaking of, who made *the great supper*; Christ and salvation are the *supper*; *sinner*s are the guests; and ministers are

the servants who are sent to bid people come to this great feast. The servants were first sent to the Jews to bid them to the supper, but they would not come. They thought they were rich, and did not need it: only a few poor people—a few publicans and sinners—gathered, as it were, in the streets and lanes of their cities, came; so that the house of the great King was not nearly filled, and the servants came and said, “Yet there is room.” Then these servants were told to go away and preach Christ to the Gentiles, and from the hedges and highways of heathen lands to bring poor sinners to Jesus, that they might find mercy and live for ever. Now, you know, it is eighteen hundred years and more since the servants of the great King of Heaven have been running to and fro through the world, to tell poor perishing souls that there is a great feast provided,—“bread enough and to spare,”—if they would only come and eat of it; still, very few will listen. Most people say, let us alone a little longer; we will come to the feast, but not just yet. You would think it strange were a poor beggar to die of hunger, at the very time when a rich man was pressing him to come to his table and eat freely, “without money and without price;” yet this is just what thousands of poor sinners are doing. They are dying for want of the bread and the water of life, at the very time when

they are invited to come to the table of the great King, "for all things are ready." God has sent many servants to tell men to come to Christ, but, oh! they will not come. Some love the world, some their pleasures, and some their friends, more than Christ; so they say, "we pray thee have us excused." Many, it is true, have come already. You remember, that once when Peter preached, three thousand came on one day. Long ago, a great many in Scotland came to Jesus and found mercy, and many more have been coming in our own day: still ministers can go to God in prayer and say, "Lord, draw more, for yet there is room;" and they can come out to their people and say, "Come, oh! come to the Saviour, and come to Heaven, for yet there is room."

Well, my young friends, I hope you all now understand what I said at the beginning, when I told you I was sent to bid you to a great feast. I am one of the servants of the great King, and am bid say to you all, "Come, come to Jesus, and come to the King's palace, which is Heaven, for yet there is room." Now, I cannot tell how many have already come to Jesus; but I am sure of this, there is room still in the heart of Jesus for the very youngest among you all; for you know He *says*, "*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom o*

God." Nor can I tell how many have already gone to Heaven, and are at this moment singing songs before the throne ; but one thing I know, Heaven is not *yet* full—there is still room for you if you will only come in by Jesus as the door. You have all heard of John Bunyan, who wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*. He was once a very wicked and profane man. He mocked at religion and religious people ; but God had pity upon him, and gave him a new heart, so that he became a very pious and holy man. "He was like a wild beast, but God tamed him." Now, this little text, "Yet there is room," was one that struck John Bunyan very much, and made him very anxious about his soul. "Yet there is room," thought he to himself, what does that mean? *room*, where? A voice seemed to whisper, room in Christ, room in Heaven ; but what, he asked again, can there be room for *me*, so vile a sinner?—for me, who have hated Christ, and laughed at religion? Oh, yes ! the voice seemed to reply, there is room for the vilest that will come just *now*, but no room for those who put off. "Yet there is room ;" that is to say, there is room to-day, but perhaps there will not be room to-morrow. Now, when John Bunyan thought on these words, he was in great distress about his soul. He saw there was some hope for him, though a vile and a wicked sinner but he saw also that there was no time to lose

The door of the ark seemed standing open to receive him, but he did not know how soon it might be shut; so he cried, "Lord, save me, I perish;" and, like a man who was fleeing for his life, he ran into the outstretched arms of Jesus and found mercy.

I. There is room for you in *Christ*, if you will only "seek Him in earnest, and seek Him in time." An old man once took me away to see the place in the church-yard, where his wife and a dear son were buried; and, with the big tears running down his aged face, he said, "Oh, Sir! a father's heart is a strange thing: there is room in it for *each* of his children, and for their mother too." Even so, I say, of the heart of Jesus; it is a strange heart: there is room in it for all, and for each one of his people. Mary Magdalene, Peter who denied his Lord, the dying thief, the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, Saul the persecutor, the jailor of Philippi, John Bunyan, and John Newton, and thousands more as vile as they, have found room in the Saviour's heart; "and yet there is room" in that heart for you and for me and for all who will come to Him, and will cry in right earnest, "Lord, remember me;" "Lord, save me I perish." Christ's heart beats warmly toward *poor sinners*; and so ready is he to receive all w

come to him, that I never heard of any one being refused, or "cast out." When he was upon earth, one day as he passed along the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, two blind men were sitting by the wayside begging; and, hearing that Jesus passed by, they cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us." He called them to come unto him, and then told them to open their eyes and look up; and when they did so, they saw every thing plainly. Another day, a man all covered with leprosy came running to him, and, falling down at his feet, cried out, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus pitied him, and said, "I will, be thou clean." One day, a poor diseased woman, who had spent all she had upon doctors, and was no better, but rather worse, came behind him in the crowd, and touched the hem of his garment; and all at once she felt herself made perfectly whole. Another day, at the gate of a city, he saw people carrying a coffin, in which lay the dead body of a young man. The mother was there: she was a widow; and this was her only son they were going to bury. The tender heart of Jesus bled for her; so when he saw the funeral procession, "he had compassion on her, and said unto her, weep not;" and then, going up to the bier, he touched it, and said to the dead man, "arise;" and immediately the man looked up, and

came to life again : and oh ! how happy would that widow be when her only son was restored to her again, so that she could say, This my son was dead, but he is alive again ; he was lost to me, but now he is found ; and how delighted would all the people be when, instead of laying the dead in the grave, they could return home, saying one to another, “ we have seen strange things to-day ! ” You see, then, my young friends, that the heart of Jesus beats very tenderly towards poor sinners. It is, I may say, a large heart ; so large that, though many have found a place in it already, there is still room for more. Did you ever hear of any not finding room in it who really sought it ? I never did. Would any of you like to find room in the warm heart of Jesus ? that is to say, would you like to have a share in his love ? then listen to what your hymn says—

“ Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Come, 'tis mercy's welcome hour ;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love, and power :
 He is able,
 He is willing—doubt no more.

“ Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall ;
*If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all :*
 Not the righteous,
 Sinners, Jesus came to call.”

Now, my young friends, I would like to ask you a question. Do you think you have found room in Jesus? You have seen a hen followed by a number of chickens—you have seen her turn her eye up towards the sky—far up, almost out of sight, she sees a hawk, steadying itself in the air over-head—all at once she gives a loud sharp cry—it is the signal of danger—and, though perhaps they never heard that cry before, the chickens all understand it, and run as fast as they can, and hide under their mother's wing. Now, Jesus says, he is willing to "gather you in his arms," and to fold you in his bosom, "even as a hen thus gathereth her chickens under her wings:" still, I am afraid many of you have never sought to hide your guilty heads under the Redeemer's wings; and the reason perhaps is this—you never saw any danger, and never heard a voice crying aloud, "flee, oh! flee, from the wrath to come!" I have heard of some sailors who, in the time of a great storm at sea, laughed at the waves, and went down thoughtless and merry-hearted to the bottom of the deep. What do you think they did? When their ship was broken on the rocks, and was ready to go to pieces, and when they saw they must perish—instead of commending their souls to God in prayer, they hoisted the brandy-cask upon deck, and drank till they forgot their danger; and, in the midst of songs and

laughter, they went down to the bottom of the sea, and very soon their voices were hushed in death. Ah! you will say, these were foolish men: their songs were out of place—their laughter was “the laughter of fools.” Yes; they were indeed foolish men; but not a bit more so than hundreds in this wicked and stupid world, who seem trying who will run fastest on the way to hell, and who are laughing and making merry, while the flames of the lake of fire are rolling underneath them.

In walking along the streets on a market-day, what do you see and hear? You see hundreds of faces apparently very happy, and you hear on every side the voice of laughter and of joy. Now, the laughter of most of these is just as foolish and as much out of place as the laughter of those sailors I have told you about. And why? because, while they rejoice, devils rejoice too; but could tears be shed in Heaven, angels would weep. Perhaps some of you will think I wish you to be sad and gloomy. Ah! no; God knows I do not. I wish you to be far happier than this world will ever make you; but that is just the reason why I would like to see you giving up your young hearts to Jesus. I would not wish to see you merry and thoughtless for a few days upon earth, and then weeping through a long eternity among devils and ruined men. Surely *it is very sad to see any man making merry so long*

as he is unconverted and has not come to Christ, because that man, for anything he knows, may be within a few steps of hell, and may have nothing between him and the lake of fire except the brittle thread of life, which at any time may be snapped asunder. Now, perhaps many of you are Christless, and yet you are light-hearted and thoughtless. "I do not deny," said a holy man, "that there are pleasures to be found out of Christ. The song, and the dance, and the exciting game, are very engaging to young hearts; but, ah! is it not an awful thing to be merry when you are unsaved? Is it not a sad thing to see an idiot laughing and making sport in a house which is all in flames? and is it not enough to make one shudder to see poor sinners merry and thoughtless when they are walking every day on the very brink of that fearful pit, 'where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth?'" Now, my young friends, this is just your condition, if you have not come to Christ. You have heard of a little boy called James Laing. He loved the Saviour, and was very anxious that all his companions would come to Jesus too, and used to say, "Oh! if they would just come, they would then be *sic* happy." I say the same to you, if you would only come, you would be so happy,—far happier than you have ever felt all your lives; but if you will not come, then you are to be pitied for.

your folly, and this very address which you are reading will witness against you at the day of judgment. Remember this,—you never can be truly happy till your souls are saved; for, though you may sometimes seem to have a happy face, you cannot, till then, have a really light or happy heart. I have heard of a wicked and hardened man, who was condemned to die, and who, on going up the ladder to be hanged, was laughing and smiling to the crowd below; but every person saw that his smiles were forced and unnatural. Do you think he had a light or a happy heart? Ah! no. Now, just so will it be with you, so long as you remain out of Christ, and do not seek “room” in His heart and in His love. You may have smiles upon your faces, but you cannot have true joy in your hearts.

Will you, then, my young friends, come to Christ? Whatever you may resolve in your hearts to do, I am sure none of you will say in words—no, we will not come. I dare say you all think of coming to Jesus *some* day, but you fancy you may safely put off this till you grow older. There are multitudes in hell who intended to seek the Lord *some* time, but who would not seek him “early,” and so they became hardened and never sought him at all. Most people intend to seek Christ before *they die*; but they do not care about seeking Him

now. Young people often say to themselves—we have plenty of time yet, we will wait till we are men and women, and then we will give our whole hearts to Jesus. Those who are men and women think—oh! we are in the very throng and bustle of life, and have not much time to think about our souls; we will be sure to attend to all these things when we become old; and then old people think they have heard of some who repented on a death-bed, and they suppose they will do so too, so they also put off to another day. Ah! my young friends, such thoughts as these have taken many souls to hell, but never brought any to heaven. You know there is not one text in all the Bible which bids you come to Christ to-morrow or any other day; but there are a great many which tell you to come to Him “*now*” and “*to-day*.” With you it may be, “*now or never*.” This address comes to you on purpose to tell you that the door of the ark is still standing open, and to invite you to enter in; and will none of you come? Oh! remember that if you do not come “*now*,” Christ may rise up and shut to the door, and so shut you out for ever; and He may say, like the great King in the parable, “that you shall never taste of his supper.” “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.” “I love them,” saith Jesus, “that love me; and they that seek me *early* shall find me.”

II. There is room in *Heaven* for those "who seek the Lord early." My young friends, do you ever think of Heaven? what kind of place it is, and who they are who are admitted into it? You know it is a holy place, and none come there without first getting new hearts, and being made holy. But Heaven is not only a holy, it is also a happy place; and it is a happy, just because it is a holy place, and because there is no sin there. You remember it is said, that, in Heaven, "there will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

"There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain."

Now, were I to ask, where you would wish to go when you die, I know you would all say, to Heaven. Well, I have to tell you, that, "yet there is room" in Heaven. There are thousands of angels there; but still there is room for poor sinners, whom Jesus came to save. I cannot tell how many have already gone to glory out of this world of sin and sorrow; but, however many have gone before, there is still room for more: but, oh! I would have you to *remember* that there is room in Heaven only for those

who first find room in Christ. Those who will not come to Christ will never get to Heaven, for Jesus says, "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father," or to Heaven, "but by me." You know that Jesus is said to be preparing mansions or dwellings for all his people in Heaven; and if you would only come to Him and follow Him, He would prepare a place for you too. I shall explain this to you by a parable.

There was once a rich man, who had great estates, and who lived in a large and beautiful palace. This man built a number of cottages on a distant corner of one of his estates, and let them out to a number of poor people. Now, this good man loved his cottagers very much, and he thought he would bring them to live nearer himself; so he fitted up rooms for them in his own palace, and laid up a great deal of riches, and beautiful garments for them to wear, when they should come there; also, he provided a great many precious and pleasant things—far more than I have time to tell you of just now. Well, after this great King, for so he was, had prepared a place for his cottagers, he sent carriages for them, and some of his own servants to bring them home to himself. He did not tell them when these carriages were to be sent for them; but he told them to be always ready, and to be looking for them every day. Now, all these poor people, one after

another, were taken away from their little cottages, and were carried to the King's own palace. Some of them thought it hard, at the time, to be turned out of their houses without longer warning ; but none of them thought this after they once came in sight of the dwellings that were prepared for them in the "better country," and saw all the rich and precious things that were laid up for them there. They then knew that the great King had loved and had been mindful of them, even when they were often forgetful of him ; so they all sung a song of praise, and, "lifting up their heads, they shouted for joy."

Now, my young friends, I daresay most of you understand what this parable means. Jesus Christ is the rich man I have been speaking of ; and Heaven is his palace : your bodies are some of the cottages he has built ; and your souls are the cottagers. If you have come to Christ, and have found a place in his heart, then, because He loves you, He would like to have you nearer himself ; so He is preparing mansions, fitting up dwellings for you in his "Father's House," and has there laid up great treasures for you and for all his people. The carriages which he sends for his cottagers are *diseases*—such as measles, or fevers, or any other *disease of which people die*. These knock down *the cottages*, and turn out the inhabitants ; but the

servants of the great King, even the angels, carry these inhabitants—that is, the souls of believers—up into Heaven—“into the bosom of Abraham,” and of Abraham’s God. Jesus does not tell his people when he is going to send for them; but he tells them to be always ready to die, and to go home to Heaven. Now, a great number of Christ’s cottagers have already been removed to the better country, and are even now singing songs before the throne; and ere long the rest will join them in that beautiful and glorious palace, where “there is no night” of darkness or of sorrow, and where “they have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Oh! how happy they all are in heaven! No tears are seen there, for God wipes all tears away; and nothing is heard but songs of joy; “and yet there is room” for you—

———“In that happy land,
Far, far away;
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day.”

Oh! then,

“Come to this happy land,
Come, come away;
Why will ye doubting stand,
Why still delay?”

But, my young friends, if you will not come to Christ, and to Heaven by Him as "the way" and "the door," then I have to tell you, that there will be room for you in a very different place. Do you ask, where? I answer, "*in hell.*" When Judas hanged himself, it is said, "he went to his own place." Ah, yes! His place in hell was all prepared, and ready for him; and so will yours be, if you refuse a place in heaven when that is offered to you. Never forget, then, that if you put off till there's no room for you in heaven, there will be room for you in hell; for

"There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains;
Where sinners shall with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains."

My young friends, let me warn you, before I conclude, against making a wrong use of what I have said about there being room for you in Christ and in Heaven. It is a blessed truth that "*yet*" there is room; but, oh! remember there will not always be room; that room is fast filling up, and very soon it will all be occupied. The door of the ark is open to-day, but it may soon be shut. You know that, very long ago, there was once a great flood of water came over the earth, so that almost all the people in the world were drowned. At that *time*, men were very wicked, and very profane; and

God told them that, if they did not repent and turn unto Him, He would destroy them ; but they would not believe God. They became still more wicked, and more profane, till, as I said, there came a terrible flood, and swept them suddenly away. Now, you remember there was one man who believed God, and was afraid of the flood. His name was Noah. God told him to build a very large vessel or ship, which is called the ark. So Noah set himself to prepare the ark, and it took him a great many years to finish it ; and all the time he was telling the people about the awful flood that was coming ; but they only laughed at him, and thought him a foolish old man to put himself to so much trouble about a thing he had never seen. I dare say, they would often come to him and say, "Well, where is the flood you talk of? The sky is as clear as ever ; the sun is rising and setting as usual—everything is looking well ; where, where is this great flood?" Wait a little," Noah might have said, "the ark is not yet finished : all things are not yet ready ; but be sure the deluge *is* coming, and that very shortly." Well, at length the ark is finished, and God says to Noah, come thou and all thy family into it ; and when they had done so, God shut them in. Then, perhaps, the wicked people would mock them, thinking they had gone to bury themselves in a prison ; and, very likely, wagging their heads,

would say, "they are mad, they are mad." But my young friends, where would you have wished to have been on that fearful day? in the ark, along with Noah and his sons, or outside the ark, among scoffing and ungodly men? Listen for a moment, and do you not hear the sound as of mighty thunder, and the rushing as of a great tempest? and look now—the faces of the very men who scoffed loudest before turn pale with fear: already the heavens are black with clouds, and the earth seems shaking under them, and while they are wondering what is going to happen, lo! the flood comes and sweeps them all away. Then there is no more scoffing at Noah; but the boldest of all are forced to say—oh! that we could now find room beside him in the ark; but, alas, it is too late! We would not enter while the door was open, and now that "door is shut, and no man can open it again."

Now, my dear young friends, you know there is another flood coming upon the world, far more terrible than the first; for it is not a flood of water, but a deluge of devouring fire. But you know also that there is an ark provided, into which you may run and be safe; and God sends this address to you, on purpose to tell you to flee to this ark quickly, and to remain outside no longer, lest the door should suddenly be shut, and you shut out *for ever*. This precious ark, you all know, is Jesus

Christ; and do you not hear a voice crying to you all, "flee, oh, flee, from the wrath to come!" and enter into the true ark before the door is shut, and the flood comes? Once more, then, I repeat, "yet there is room"—room in Christ and room in Heaven; but how long there will be room I dare not say. Oh! then,

"Obey the gospel call,
And enter while you may;
The flock of Christ is always small,
And none are safe but they."

A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE:*

BEING AN ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG.

Acts xi. 26. "A whole year."

MY young friends, the text I have chosen for this evening is a very short one and will be easily remembered. You have perhaps seldom heard a sermon preached from a shorter; yet short as it is, it is a very solemn and important text, and I think

* The following Address to children was delivered by the lamented Author, on the first Sabbath of the year, to the young people attending the Sabbath schools connected with his own congregation. It was repeated in a neighbouring church the second Sabbath previous to his death, and was the last discourse he ever preached. This fact gives a melancholy interest to some of its statements,—as if he had almost a presentiment of his own nearness to eternity. It was of course very hastily prepared, and in its present shape, would undoubtedly never have been allowed by him to meet the public eye. It is only published at the urgent solicitude of many who heard it, and in the belief that even in its imperfect state, it will be very acceptable to the young people of his flock, in whose spiritual welfare he felt so deep an interest while he lived, and to whom in this discourse he still speaks from the grave.—*Dundee, May, 1852.*

peculiarly suitable for this the first Sabbath of another year. Some of you will probably remember that on the first Sabbath of the year that is gone I preached to you from these words, "The grave whither thou goest." To me it seems but as yesterday since I preached to you that sermon, yet how many changes have taken place since then? Some who were present that evening have gone down to the grave and their place amongst us knows them no more. We who are here assembled are fast following them to the "house appointed for all living." None in this church can tell how near they may be to the grave; for at any moment there is but a step between us and death. This one thing however we all know, that since we met on the first Sabbath of the departed year we are all of us "a whole year" nearer the judgment-seat of Christ, and, need I add, "a whole year" nearer either heaven or hell. Keeping these solemn facts in mind, we cannot be better employed this evening than in asking ourselves what lessons they are fitted to teach. I speak not only to the Sabbath Scholars, but to all within these walls; and whatever be their age or condition in the world, whether they be "young men or maidens, old men or children," I think it may be good for them to remember the solemn fact that another "whole year" has passed for ever away; that a whole year

has been subtracted from the winged moments of time; that they are a "whole year" nearer death and eternity.

Now, my young friends, if you look at the verse in the middle of which my text stands, you will see that a year was thought a long time for the Apostle Paul to remain preaching the gospel in one city. He and Barnabas, it is said, came to a city called Antioch, and continued there a "whole year," preaching Christ to the people. As Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland, and London the capital of England, so this Antioch was the capital of Syria. It was a large and flourishing city; and there is one thing especially which makes it to us a very interesting city; it was there, you remember, that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. They used to be called believers or disciples, and their enemies called them Nazarenes. But in Antioch they were first called Christians. Does not that one circumstance make you feel an interest in this city of Antioch? Well, the Apostle Paul felt an interest in it too, and remained longer in it than he did in most of the cities which he visited, except in Ephesus, where he preached for nearly three years, and Corinth, where he remained about two, and Rome, where he dwelt "two years in his own hired house;" except in these three important cities, I do not know that Paul preached so long.

any where else as he did at Antioch. At all events, he was thought to have remained longer there than he was accustomed to do in other places, and so it is said he continued in Antioch "*a whole year*, and taught much people." Paul, you know, was not a fixed minister, set over a particular congregation. He went forth to preach the gospel where none had preached it before, and seldom remained longer than a few weeks or months in the same place. Like his Master before him, he did not refuse to preach to any congregation because it was small, for he preached with encouraging success to a few women at a prayer meeting by a river's side, and to the Philippian jailor in the prison. But while he delighted to tell of a Saviour's grace and love, though he had only one sinner to hear him, he was better pleased still to preach Christ to a multitude. As a fisherman likes well to let down his net into the sea, where there are shoals of fish, so Paul, who was "a fisher of men," loved to cast the gospel net among a multitude of people. It was partly this feeling that led him to visit so many cities, and that brought him to Antioch. He knew also that if the gospel got a footing in the towns it would be likely to spread to the country round about. And that, if in such a city as Antioch, Christ was fully preached and believed on, the people in the scattered villages and in the

country round about would soon hear the news, and become acquainted with the "joyful sound." This, moreover, was probably one reason why Paul remained longer than usual in this influential city. It was the capital of the country, and expected to take the lead in any important movement. Hence Paul continued there a "*whole year*, and taught much people."

You see, then, that a year was thought a long time for the people of Antioch to have the gospel preached to them. Ah! we are ready to think that a year is a very little while. When it is past it seems almost like a dream or as a sleep when one awaketh, yet, short as it looks, "*a whole year*" is a long time if you consider how short your life is altogether. It is a long time to enjoy as a season of grace—a long time to keep Christ standing and knocking at a shut door—a long time to give an account of to God. And then, it is a solemn thing to be a "*whole year*" nearer eternity.

My dear young friends, let me try and shew you:—

I. *That a "whole year" is a long time if you consider how short and uncertain your life is.* You would think an hundred and thirty years a long time to live. You never saw a man so old as that. It was Jacob's age when he stood before Pharoah. *The king, struck with the old man's appearance,*

asked him, "how old art thou?" and Jacob replied, "the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years, few and evil have the days of my life been." Looking forward you would think a hundred years would be long in passing away, but Jacob, looking back, did not think so, they seemed few as well as evil. The truth is, seasons are long or short very much as we compare them. The difference between a longer or a shorter life may forcibly strike us at the time, when one is consigned to an early grave, and another is spared for a long series of years, but the difference disappears at once in the presence of eternity. There seems to us at present much difference between the duration of a flower that lives not half a summer, and blooms but for a single day, and the oak of the forest, that has stood for a hundred years, and still bursts out into fresh and beautiful foliage every returning spring; much difference between the ephemeral fly, an insect that lives only for a day, and other creatures that live for a century, much difference too between the life of a babe which is laid in an infant's grave, and the old man who dies under the infirmities of years. But then, this difference is all gone in the presence of eternity. What does it signify to saints in glory or to sinners in hell, that one died at five, and others at ten or twenty? That differ-

ence is all lost in the vast and unmeasured eternity that lies before. In any event, it may be said, the days of our pilgrimage are few. That was Job's estimate of life, when he said, "my days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." You have seen a weaver at his loom. Your eye cannot follow the shuttle as it darts from one side of the web to the other; yet such is life, that flits past unobserved as a weaver's shuttle. Again, he says, "my days are passed away like the swift ships." You may have seen a ship leaving the harbour with the wind filling the sails. How it flies before the wind! A little while ago, you could distinguish the sailors, and see them busy among the ropes and sails. Now you cannot see them. Now the large ship becomes a little speck on the surface of the ocean. And now, as you gaze upon it from the shore, it is out of view on the wide world of waters. You have seen the grass growing beautifully green when the mower came with a scythe and cut it down and it withered away; and "all flesh is as grass." You have stood by a wood in autumn and seen the leaves come rustling down, and so we "all fade like a leaf." You have stood on the hill side on a summer morning, and seen the mist flying over the mountain's brow, and "what is your life but a vapour that passeth away?" But my young friends, the *facts and realities* of life teach us the same solemn-

nizing truth. It is calculated that half of the human race die under the age of twelve. You have seen, I dare say, a little coffin, much less than would be required for any of you. Only two days ago I was in the churchyard at the funeral of one who was old, but I saw several very short graves, and the recently broken earth showed they were but lately filled. You remember some of your little companions, who a little while ago laughed and played along with you, who are now filling these graves. And when you think how uncertain life is, does not a "whole year" seem a large and important part of it? Hezekiah was once promised fifteen years, but you are not promised one. At the beginning of last year God said to you, "Boast not of to-morrow;" yet he has spared you a "whole year." But very likely not many more remain.

"A few more years shall roll,
A few more seasons come,
And we shall be with those that rest,
Asleep within the tomb."

II. *A whole year is a long time to have enjoyed as a season of grace.*

Suppose an unhappy prisoner condemned to die. The Queen sends a messenger to offer him a free pardon. Would you not think it strange were that man to refuse to accept it? Were the offer repeated day after day for "a whole year," whether

would you wonder most at the folly of the unfortunate prisoner, or at the kindness of the sovereign in continuing to press upon him such a precious boon? Now, what is the gospel? It is an offer of pardon through the blood of Christ to guilty and condemned sinners. "A whole year" is a long time to have such an offer made to us. The devils in hell never had such a season of grace, for Jesus did not shed one drop of his precious blood for them. Many of the human race never heard of salvation by the cross of Christ. Born and bred in some heathen land, where the very tales of the nursery are the legends and stories of heathen divinities, they have sucked in superstition and idolatry with their mother's milk, and have been worshipping devils instead of God. But it is happily different with you. It is well, however, this evening to remember that "a whole year" of gospel privilege has passed away. Jonah preached in Nineveh *three days*, and the guilty inhabitants of that large and populous city got forty days to repent. Sychar had Jesus *two days* preaching in it the word of the kingdom. But you have had Christ "a whole year" pleading with you and beseeching you to be reconciled unto God. Surely you have had a precious season of grace, a day of salvation, a golden *opportunity*, that might have been blessed to

the saving of your souls. You have sat under a gospel ministry. You have heard many a lesson in the Sabbath school about the way of life. Many a sermon has pointed you to the City of Refuge. Many a providence has knocked at your door. For these fifty-two Sabbaths the Lord has been present to heal in the ordinances of his grace. My young friends, you don't know that you will ever have *such* another season. Yours is a precious spring time, when seed sown in faith and prayer will certainly secure a blessing. It is the time when the character is in a great measure formed. "Habits which are now with you like threads of silk, will, if suffered to go on, become like bands of iron." None are in a happier condition than you, and none have stronger motives and encouragements to seek Christ and his grace. Oh! what a blessing to be in Christ in early life; it will save you many a bitter pang, and free you from a weight of actual transgression that lies heavily on the conscience of other men.

"A few more Sabbaths here
Shall cheer us on our way;
And we shall reach the endless rest,
The eternal Sabbath day."

III. "*A whole year*" is a long time for any of you to have kept Christ standing and knocking at a shut door.

Suppose the master of a house away from home on business ; he returns late in the evening and finds the door closed ; he knocks but nobody rises to let him in, he stands knocking all night exposed to the rain and the cold, till he can say, "my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Would you not think that a long time for a man to be kept knocking at the door of his own house ? Ah ! I fear many of you have kept Jesus far longer than this knocking at the door of your hearts. He has not knocked once or twice, and then gone away, as one who did not care whether you opened or not. He began to knock at your door in early life, by a father's counsel or a mother's prayers, as soon as you could distinguish between good and evil. And now, for a "whole year," many of you have refused to let him in. But, you may ask, how does he knock at my door ? He does it by the warning and reproofs of your *own conscience*. Did you never feel something in your own breast telling you it was wrong to sin against God, and checking you for doing something you ought not ? Did you never find that you were unhappy when you tried to deceive your teachers or parents, or when you profaned God's holy day ? Had you never the conviction strongly impressed on your mind, that *you ought to love the Saviour*, and give your young

heart to him ? Now, what is all this, but just the Lord knocking loudly within your own bosom, and calling upon you to hear and live ? He knocks by the rod of his *Providence*. The trials and crosses of your earthly lot, the disappointments and vexations of life, the personal afflictions or family bereavements to which you are daily exposed, are loud calls to consider the vanity of all earthly things, and to look for your home beyond the grave. Perhaps in your dreams by night, or the airy castles which you build by day, you imagine you see in the distance before you many bright days of happiness and health. You think of the time when you will be men and women, and you are full of hope in the anticipation of life and pleasure. But what if these dreams should turn out not to be real ? When some of the trees of a plantation are to be cut down, the forester puts a mark upon them, and then the hewers come with their axes and fell them to the ground. Now what if death's mark be at this moment on some of you ? what, if unseen by us, the axe of death is ready to strike down some ruddy cheeked boy or healthy girl ? Yes, my young friends, death's mark *is* upon each of you, and when a companion as young and healthy is cut down, it is a loud knock at your door. There are orphan children, fatherless and motherless, in so far as earthly parents are con-

cerned. There are children who have seen a little brother or sister carried to the grave. And there are children whose head has ached with violent pain, telling them that they were mortal and must one day die. Now what is all this but the Lord's voice, who stands knocking at your door; and surely "a whole year" is a long time to have kept him knocking, without opening to him the door of your heart. Jesus knocks by his *Word*. Every sermon you hear, every text you learn at the Sabbath school, and every chapter or verse you read, is another and another knock at your door. It sometimes happens that the truth heard on the first day of the week, or the hymn learned at the Sabbath school, which seemed at the time like "water spilt on the ground," has sprung up in the heart of the sailor when tossed on the stormy deep, and in the breast of the soldier in the field of battle. In the wide solitude of some distant colony, or in the gloomy cell of the prison, the word of life, heard in the days of youth, sometimes comes to mind and tells the captive how he may obtain a noble freedom. When the mind, subdued and tamed by affliction, recalls those golden opportunities that seem to be lost, the heart swells, the eye fills, and the tear falls, as the text or the chapter, or the sermon heard in former *years*, comes back to the memory, telling of mercy

yet in store, and leading the wounded and bleeding soul to the Balm in Gilead and the Physician there. Yet, my young friends, you cannot tell whether another day of grace will be yours, or whether the precious word of God you have heard for "a whole year" will be heard again. Your pulse and mine, which is the clock of our life, will soon beat its last.

"My pulse is the clock of my life,
It shows how my moments are flying,
It marks the departure of time,
And it tells me how fast I am dying."

Once more,—The Lord knocks by *his Spirit*. And those who, instead of holding when He draws and resisting when he strives, hear these knocks and calls, are sure to find it "a day of salvation." When the Spirit of God moved on the mass of human minds on the day of Pentecost, it was in a peculiar sense an "accepted time and a day of salvation." Three thousand improved it, so that they "tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." But he was also striving with others at that solemn time, who resisted his enlightening, convincing, and sanctifying work, and so suffered a precious day of salvation to pass away,

while they were unsaved and unblessed. But such a season allowed to slip, is not likely to be followed by another equally favourable. Convictions produced in the mind, either by the exercise of conscience, or by the natural influence of the Word of God, or by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit applying the truth, will either prove a blessing or a curse. They will either subdue the soul, or leave it harder and more unlikely to be ever again seriously impressed. Such convictions are only got rid of by doing violence to conscience and despite to the Spirit of grace. You have seen a man knocking at a door but no one opens. He gives a *last knock* and then goes away. So the Lord gives *his last* knock at the sinner's door. When by his Spirit he is striving to enlighten and warn your young and thoughtless heart, he is "putting in his hand to open the door." But if the Spirit is quenched and grieved when he secretly stirs and works in the mind ; if in short he is resisted, till he is provoked finally to depart, then must you be delivered up to a hard heart and a reprobate mind. You will have lost an accepted time, and a precious day of grace. Ah ! my young friends, when you think of "a whole year," fled *for ever away*, beware of any longer stifling convictions, or grieving the Spirit of truth.

IV. "*A whole year,*" is a long time to give account of to God.

* * * (*This part is wanting.*)

V. *It is a solemn thing to be "a whole year" nearer eternity.*

When one is upon a journey, every milestone he passes on the road, brings him a mile nearer the place to which he is travelling ; so every year as it passes, brings us "a whole year" nearer eternity. Some one here must be first away. Perhaps it may be one of the boys in *that* pew, or one of the girls in *this* one. Very possibly I myself may be the first. One day a minister was preaching about the nearness of death. Suddenly he paused, and then as if pointing to some one, said, "thou young man that mockest at death—thou goest to the grave. The spade may be made that is to dig it ; the cloth that is to be thy winding-sheet may be already woven, and that clock (pointing to one before him in the church,) may be counting out the few remaining hours thou art still to live." So, my young friends, it is now with you.

"Look mother ! look," said a little boy to his mother, at a time when cholera was slaying thousands in a certain town ; "look ! there is the black

carriage again." His mother looked and saw a hearse and a funeral procession passing by. But, when will that black carriage stop at our door? none of us can tell how soon; only the time is "a whole year" nearer than when the past year began. And is not this a solemn thought? Yet, dear children, I would not speak to you about the grave at all, if I could not speak to you a word of comfort in such a prospect. There is *one grave* the sight of which may make the thought of yours less terrible. What grave is that? It is the grave of Jesus. You know He died for sinners. But He is not now in the tomb. "He is risen, as He said." His grave is empty. Come, see where the Lord lay, and learn that if you believe on him, and love him, you shall rise too and live with him in heaven for ever. Ah! this makes death easy to a child of God; this strews, as with roses, the cold and silent grave. One day a mother went into a churchyard, and sat down by a grave where a child she had loved was buried. As she sat there and wept, a butterfly rose from a wild flower, and kept fluttering about over the grave. That butterfly was a little before shut up in its shell, as motionless and still as the babe in its coffin beneath the turf. But now it has got these beautiful wings and flutters in the sunbeams, full of life *and joy*. So, thought she, my child shall come,

forth from that little grave. It shall one day burst its shell and come forth in immortal life, clothed with celestial beauty, and animated with celestial joy. The grave is indeed a long home, but not an eternal one. The dead shall rise again. And while I have said it is a solemn thought to be "a whole year" nearer to eternity, it may at the same time be a very happy and joyful thought, if you are "a whole year" nearer heaven and glory.

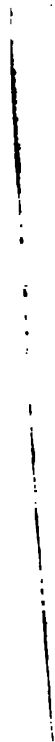
"Go, ere the clouds of sorrow
Steal o'er the bloom of youth;
Defer not till to-morrow,—
Go now and buy the truth.

Go, seek thy great Creator,
Learn early to be wise,
Go, place upon his altar
A morning sacrifice."

FINIS.



4





[REDACTED]

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